BY INHERITANCE

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Author of

THE MAN OF THE HOUR
THE LION'S SHARE

With Illustrations by
THOMAS FOGARTY

"Slow moves the pageant of a climbing race."

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CHAPTER I

ASHES OF ROSES

"GOOD-BY," said the friend, still retaining Miss Agatha Danforth's hand on the threshold of the door which a neat maid held open; "this surely will be Thanksgiving for you." Miss Danforth made the expected answer: "It ought to be," accompanied by the expected smile. Still smiling, she watched her friend take the path to the gate between the rusted and dried hydrangea bushes which autumn had seen so ruddily glowing.

But when she returned to her little writing-room off the library, when she sank into the luxurious wing chair which had belonged to Great-grandmother Plunkett, extending her slender feet toward the comforting blaze of the wood fire on Great-grandfather Danforth's andirons, the smile faded.

"This is the fifth time to-day," mused Agatha, "that I have been told I ought to be thankful. Well, it is true." For no cause within her ken she sighed even as she began to enumerate those eminent reasons which her friends or she might cite.

She was entirely recovered from a critical operation; and clean rid of a creeping fear which, during the last two years, had kept pushing up through the interstices of her solid, compact, sensible waking thoughts, and had run riot, choking her heart, in the unguarded ways of sleep. It was something to be thankful for that she had a good vision—albeit with eye-glasses—and a hearing as keen as ever. Neither could she detect any failure of memory—she never could keep names straight.

She was well and strong; she ran her own little electric car; sometimes she drove her own spirited horses; and she could walk five miles without every muscle reminding her of it the next morning. Moreover, she had not only kept her faculties, but her figure, and a great deal of her hair. If the latter had turned gray, gray hair was to be expected at sixty—it was only seemly; to be wearing the lustrous raven tresses of her youth would have been almost like wearing peek-a-boo shirt-waists and pink snoods or any "dressing too young," a weakness abhorred by all the Danforths.

She was thankful, but in secret—for she was a modest woman, with a faithful conscience—that she had been born a Danforth, of honorable and God-fearing New England ancestry; that her father, Colonel Danforth, had been a noble gentleman and brave soldier—he fell in the Civil War—and that her mother, a Winthrop, had been beautiful and sweet and had never married again. She returned thanks,

furthermore, that she had lived all her life in the most beautiful county in Massachusetts.

Neither did she forget among her mercies the circumstance that she had been left a fortune ample enough for countless small generosities and some larger ones. Doubtless her friends held that she ought to feel especial gratitude for all the millions which a distant cousin had left her, unexpectedly; but, indeed, this legacy had rather overwhelmed her. It was a weight on her conscience, and now that prospective possession was actual fact, she shrank from her new responsibilities.

To be sure she could conceive a way of lessening the burden. This way she had been considering seriously, so seriously that on the George Washington writing-desk of gleaming mahogany—a bequest from the giver of the millions, Cousin Nicholas Tillinghust—lay a ponderous legal document. Only the scrawl of a pen, and a third of her inheritance would be gone. A lonely spinster with no brother or sister living; her nieces and nephews perhaps likely to be better off for not too great bequests added to their own comfortable portions, her nearest friends rich, she felt herself exceptionally free to listen to impersonal movements of the heart. But as has been said, Agatha Danforth had a conscience accustomed to command. Because of this conscience her wealth was not to be shifted thoughtlessly to other shoulders. And in trying to decide, it was on her soul that she must listen to all the voices; wherefore she

had spent her morning in the past. Now she felt dazed and a little giddy; as one feels who, in a great railway station, has been reading an absorbing tale of heroic emotions, and is awakened by the blare of a megaphone announcing one's train; or, as De Quincey has potently put it in the essay *On the Knocking on the Gate in Macbeth,* as one feels coming out of a lighted theater and a great drama into the noisy and bustling street. Agatha would have said that she had lived an interesting life. She had seen many lands and many people. But unknown to herself, since her first youth, its romance and its heartbreak, she had lived upon the surface.

There had always been the wide streets pleasantly shady and the sky line ennobled with mountains; there always was her church and the Athenæum and the Wednesday Morning Club and lessons of one cultivating sort or another; and the old family friends and her own intimates, especially Henrietta Williams, a wealthy spinster like herself, direct descendant of that irascible Colonel Williams, of colonial days, who founded "William School" out of his resentment because his son could not walk close to the first in the Harvard line; there were her charities administered with wise humanity; and the House of Mercy, where she had furnished two rooms and endowed a free ward; there were her books, her pictures—she could tell more about the Barbizon school and German renaissance than the distinguished artist who had occupied the entire morning at the Wednes-

day Club making a kindergarten explanation of knowledge familiar to most of his audience—and there were her pleasant trips oversea to the famous cities of the world where she invariably took lessons in languages and art, and hunted down every Massachusetts name on the hotel registers, lest haply an acquaintance should escape.

The years of her later youth and her mature life stretched out before her, holding deep sorrows, for in them death had taken the nearest of her own blood, but no turbulent anguish, no terrors nor despair nor murky problems. It was all placid, a life like a well-tilled farm where every duty, pleasure or gentle sorrow was behind its own little trig fence of custom; an orderly, comely, fertile life, but a life of conventions where one took the passions on hearsay and the human heart was decently expurgated before examination.

But once, when she was a young, young girl, it had been different. Then she had lived with every nerve of heart and soul. She was old enough to remember the fiery furnace of the Civil War. A soldier's daughter, she had known the ghastliness of suspense; the desolation of deadly certainty, when the little yellow slip trembled in the kind neighbor's hand, and the dressmaker who had "always sewed for the Danforths" came hastily out of the house where she was "engaged," with reddened eyelids but a firm mouth; and those weary black frocks began. Before that time was a day so vivid that the child al-

ways remembered it. There was a morning when her father at family prayers, prayed the first and only prayer not in the Prayer Book which she ever heard from his lips. He prayed for "Thy servant, John Brown, who will to-day sacrifice his life because of his effort to succor the poor and needy and undo the wrong committed by our forefathers;" and while Agatha's mother wept silently and even little Giles was hushed into decorum, he prayed that "Thy servant" might be "strengthened in his hour of trial and that his death might not be in vain, but might stir the souls of his countrymen to repentance and to restitution that this land might be cleansed of the curse of innocent blood." Never thereafter did Agatha hear the closing prayer in the Order of the Visitation of the Sick that she was not back in that old-fashioned stiffly furnished "parlor," her little elbows on the shining black haircloth of the rocking-chair and her troubled little face propped up on her hands, listening to her father's changed and solemn voice: "Unto God's gracious mercy and protection we commit him. The Lord bless and keep him. The Lord make his face to shine upon him; and be gracious unto him. The Lord lift up his countenance and give him peace, both now and ever more."

To-day, that scene returned and others with it, for all the afternoon Agatha had been roaming through the dim aisles of the past. The desk at her side was covered with neat piles of envelopes, time-

worn, creased and yellow, among which were little photographic *cartes,* faded and yellow like the letters.

Here were letters from her soldier father to her mother during that tremendous period of moral upheaval. Letters from the general commanding and his brother officers to her mother after her father's death, letters that she had read to-day, for the hundredth time, with a new throb of comprehension and pathos, vivifying the old sense of pride and love. How strange to think it, her father was younger by many years than she when he died! A few letters from the great men of the time, two letters from Stanton, half a dozen from Charles Sumner and one precious scrawl with A. L. at the end. In a little special pile were some envelopes of another character, each plainly indorsed in a clear, elegant, feminine hand. The indorsements were significant.

"From Aunt Lucinda Pendleton, runaway slave, 1856.

"From Tim Laramer, fugitive, 1855.

"From Poor Mammy Patience, who saved herself and four small children, but died in consequence of exposure."

Thus the inscriptions ran. The letters came through Agatha's Aunt Agatha, her father's sister, long since dead, about whose memory gleamed a double halo of saintly living and personal charm. During Agatha's childhood she had used to visit this gracious gentlewoman, often; sometimes in Boston,

sometimes in her far-away home in Vermont. Out of her memory of such visits rose shadowy pictures of black faces convulsed with fright and gratitude. Again she was feeling the throbbing of her own little heart over the stories told with streaming eyes in tumults of emotion, stranger to the self-restrained New England woman, who remembered, than to the child who listened.

With this packet was a sketch, from memory, of a huge mulatto, Steven Rutherford. He had a magnificent torso, but his big eyes were mild and sad and there was almost timid good-will in his heavy features. The sketch was the portrait of a slave who had sheltered and nursed Agatha's future lover, Captain Roger Gardiner, when he escaped from a Confederate prison, during the last year of the war. After the war Gardiner had sought long and patiently for him, only to find, at last, a neglected grave. His gratitude, thus thwarted in its natural direction, went out toward the whole race of his dead rescuer.

Roger Gardiner died two months before his appointed wedding-day, suddenly killed in a railway accident. He was on his way home from a visit to his sweetheart. Ever after all the happenings of that last happy afternoon together were enshrined in Agatha's heart with a tender sanctity. It fell out that their talk had drifted on to Roger's escape and he had spoken of his gratitude to Steven Rutherford. He gave her the sketch, which was

of his own making. "Steve had a big, hard hand," he said, gazing on the picture with reminiscent sadness; "but it was so very gentle; the doctor didn't handle me anything like so softly when *he* dressed my wound. Steve didn't know much of medicine save to be kind, but he had all sorts of little devices to ease the pain; I can feel now, this minute, the lovely, cool drip of the water through the bandage. I used to listen for that big darky's step just as, when a little boy, I listened for my mother's step the time I broke my leg. Why, I fairly loved the sight of his big, smiling, *good* face. I suppose he risked his life helping me, but I don't seem to go back to that so much, but I keep remembering the awfully nice *little things* he did for me. You see I was only a homesick college boy then—barely twenty, and I had been through a lot of awful sights and sounds, lying all night on that battle-field, and seeing fellows die in prison afterward, and I suppose my nerves were pretty sore. Steve was so soothing! I can't do anything for him; his wife and son have disappeared; I was told they, too, are dead, so I simply have to be good to all Steve's race. I wish I could do something *big* for them. You'd help me, wouldn't you, little girl?"

"Indeed I would," Agatha had said out of a full heart.

"That's it, little girl; if we can't do big things, we will do the small ones we can; and we'll never forget."

"Never," answered Agatha. And for the first time, quite of her own accord, she threw her arms about her lover's neck, and kissed him. "How could I," she whispered, "when one of them saved you for me?"

Ah, how many, many times had she been thankful for that first, last, spontaneous caress! Well, she had kept her word. The elderly woman whose heart had beaten so high that long-ago day and now seemed beyond quickening its sedate pace for any emotion, felt a strange, painful thrill, the haunting of a spent anguish. Her eyes were dim as she recalled how, through her desolate mourning, she had sought comfort in innumerable acts of kindness to Steven Rutherford's race. Never had an appeal in behalf of the negroes found her listless. Conscientiously, but always mercifully, she had investigated and generously she had given. She had helped individuals; and she had helped societies. Her name was blessed at Atlanta, at Vanderbilt, at Hampton, at Fisk, at Tuskegee. She made no distinction of aims or methods or partisanship. That negroes should be divided among themselves seemed to her a tragic pity, but she did not take sides with any faction of African reformers; and when she spoke warmly of Professor Du Bois she added a kind word for Doctor Booker Washington. Once she had journeyed, in company with several other eastern philanthropists, to Alabama and been vastly impressed with the visible evidences of negro progress there

collated. She had aided gifted young negroes, sometimes with shining results, oftener, as she confessed to Henrietta, with depressing failure.

Her latest and most brilliant protégé was a young man of mixed race whose eloquence had quite dazzled the Harvard debaters. He had been supported by her through his college course; and now, after being graduated from the Law School, he was urging her to found a southern university for the higher education of his people. Although he did not mention such a desire, she suspected that he would expect one of the most responsible chairs in the faculty, possibly to be president. Latterly, since Agatha knew of her great fortune, he had been employed by her at a liberal salary to investigate the colleges of his people; and their general condition in the North. Soon she expected him to go South on a similar errand. All the while he never lost sight nor let her lose sight of his daring scheme. And his eloquence had prospered beyond his own guessing, for during the last six months she had patiently thought out a deed of gift. She had taken counsel of the friends of the negro in whom she had most confidence. But it was characteristic of her that she should speak tentatively only, even to these. "Agatha Danforth," as her friend Henrietta truly said, "never talked about the party she was going to give—but didn't." Thus no one but her lawyer suspected her real intentions. Slowly the project had matured, while she was waiting to come into her fortune.

Behind the piles of time-stained envelopes and photograph *cartes* now on the desk lay the document which a few strokes from her pen could transform into a tremendous force, reaching its invisible tentacles all over the land. Beside it lay an equally important paper, her own last will and testament, waiting for her signature. And above them she mused. Her mind had left her long train of causes for thankfulness, which somehow did not excite that emotion; had left the Deed of Gift and even left the vision of the enthusiastic gratitude to be expected of Sidney Danton, its promoter. She had slipped away from the present and was back in the world of her vanished happiness. So long was it vanished that the image of her young lover seemed to mock her gray years. It seemed indecorous, almost indelicate, thus to link her world-wearied presence with his immortal youth. Her fingers trembled among his letters. Words and sentences sprang at her from the creased and yellow sheets; tender adjectives, ardent phrases, happy turns of a lover's fancy at which the elderly woman, reading, smiled sadly; and on one page: "I have been all evening with Shelley. It doesn't seem possible that *we* shall ever come to say:

" 'O World, O Life, O Time!
On whose last steps I climb,
Trembling at that where I had stood before;
When will return the glory of your prime?
No more—O nevermore!

" 'Out of the day and night
A joy has taken flight;
Fresh spring and summer and winter hoar
Move my faint heart with grief, but with delight
No more—O nevermore!' "

Alas! one of the joyous young creatures was saying it now. "I feel as if he belonged to another," said Agatha, "to that girl I am not any more. It is dreary, dreary work growing old. Why did I mind dying? I wonder, was I *afraid* to meet Roger? Because I am so old and worn?" She looked at the miniature which always stood open on her desk; and her lips quivered, but directly they closed into their firm custom of expression with their twist of humor at the corners. "This is sheer morbidness!" Agatha Danforth pronounced in self-disgust. With a frown of resolution she laid a steady hand on the imposing-looking document before her. She unfolded it; she read it over; she turned the last neatly typewritten page, holding it down with her left hand, whereon sparkled undimmed the diamond which her lover had given her forty years before. Her right hand approached a pen. At the very instant her fingers closed on it, by some obscure diversion of her thought, she glanced out of the window.

A wide, elm-shaded, beautiful street; a street of which poets had sung, down the length of which great men had walked! She never looked at it without a little thrill of love. It was drawn softly in the November grayness, the dignified old mansions

revealed through the gray lacework of leafless branches. Down this street she beheld Sidney Danton walking toward her home. Her eye dwelt on his slim, erect figure, his silky black curls, his handsome, light-brown face. He walked with a grace of his own. His dress was foppish, but save for the touch of extravagance in the rather gayer fabric, the crimson knit silk of his cravat and the bright barred linen, it was perfect, and he had the carefully groomed look of a Harvard man. "It is worth while doing something to help such as he," thought Agatha.

Oddly enough, she wondered why she had not a warmer feeling for this beautiful dark boy. After all, it was but a chilly kindliness which her conscience, not her heart, kept alight. Had he been a white boy, she told herself remorsefully, she would have been proud of him; no doubt plotting his marriage to some of her girl favorites. And just here, as if summoned by her thought, one of her prime favorites—whom indeed she coveted for a niece—turned the corner on to her street. She came from the opposite direction toward Danton, whose hand was on the gate. Simultaneously, two young colored men turned into the street laughing and joking, in unctuous African hilarity. One was a railway porter, from his dress, the other, possibly, a waiter in a hotel. They both stared at Danton. The latter's hand dropped to his side; he continued his walk until opposite the young girl, when he lifted his hat

with the easy deference of a social equal, and halted to speak a few words. She smiled civilly, if not cordially. Agatha saw the teeth of the two negroes flash as they exchanged some sort of comment, and immediately coming opposite to Danton, they both swept off their hats and bowed. He returned the salute formally, and passed on, hardly looking at them, but after they boarded the passing street-car, they stood on the platform watching his back and laughing to each other, until the car whipped round the corner. Almost immediately Danton turned on his heel and made straight for the Danforth gate. He walked briskly up the walk to the door.

"He *is* a bit of a *poseur!*" thought the keen-witted observer at the window, "he wanted those colored men to see him talking to her."

She looked at the document on the desk, at her own hand—and laid the pen, still dry, on the tray.

"There is no hurry," said she, as she pushed the paper into a long pigeonhole.

Suddenly, she was aware that she had no mind to listen to Sidney Danton's melodious pleadings that day. Her wraps lay on a chair just as she had thrown them a short time ago. She donned them hastily, hearing Danton's ring during the toilet, and then, out of an impulse which she was never quite able to analyze, she stepped into the large closet out of the library, where she kept the silver safe. She closed the door just as the step of Matilda, her own maid, sounded in the hall outside. On Thursdays,

being the waitress' holiday, Matilda tended door. She merely glanced into the room; directly Agatha could hear Danton's voice in reply to the girl's assertion that Miss Danforth was not at home, a rich, softly vibrant voice with the correctest Boston accent; "Pardon me, but are you *sure?* I am almost certain that I saw her at the window."

"She *was* in the room," returned Matilda demurely—she did not add, "sir"—"but I just now looked in, and her coat and hat are gone."

Nothing seemed left to Danton but to accept the verdict and leave his card, which he promptly offered to the girl. Would she be sure to give it to Miss Danforth and to tell her how very, very sorry he felt not to find her? Matilda would—still without any deferential particle of "sir;" and in a moment his light footsteps echoed faintly along the walk.

Miss Danforth heard Matilda's giggle as the maid passed the open library door; she surmised the cause of this giggle the moment she turned to leave her hiding-place, since then she perceived that her gown had caught in the crack of the door and one corner of the skirt must have protruded. Matilda had divined the retreat made by her mistress' New England conscience from a bold "Not at home;" and her own conscience being trained in much the same spiritual hothouse, had forced her to infer rather than state outright that Miss Danforth had gone out.

Meekly enough Agatha removed her jacket and sat down again by the fire.

She tried to divert her thoughts by looking about her. On the wall was the picture of her only brother, Giles, who died three years ago. This was the father of the boy in Arkansas. Giles' mother had married again recently and was in Europe with her husband. On the mantel smiled young Giles himself, his riding breeches tucked into high boots, wearing his plantation soft hat and a woolen shirt. He was mounted on a splendid horse, and for background, a forest with strange forms of tree and shrub stretched against the sky.

The face of her only nephew, eager, handsome and audacious, held her eyes. He was sawing lumber in Arkansas now. But during his four college years he had spent his vacations with her. He was a western lad, and often enough she had deplored his lack of outward modesty and his frank confidence in himself, but somehow, at this moment of perplexity, it was to him rather than to her dead sister's children, the girls with their prosperous husbands and growing little flocks, that her heart turned. She was glad he looked so cheerful in the picture. He had gone away with a heavy heart, having left the most adorable girl in the world before he could win her. Life, he told his aunt, would never hold any happiness for him without Gladys, but since his father had left that timber contract, he guessed he would better go saw it up before they stole it all, down there. One place looked about as attractive as another to him; and he'd heard there

was good shooting. Poor Giles, he was hard hit! Gladys Vassall was gone to Europe without a word and the sun had darkened. But really it was lucky for him Gladys didn't want him; only—

Matilda announced the afternoon mail. Agatha looked through it listlessly; notes from friends, a few business letters, last of all, a stamped envelope bearing in the corner the inscription, "Ralph F. Montgomery and Company, Planters and Plantation Supplies."

The same inscription headed the letter paper. In a second her eye had caught the purport of the letter:

"MISS DANFORTH:

"DEAR MADAM—I am very sorry to disturb you, but my grandfather and my aunt think that you should know that Mr. Danforth has a *light* case of typhoid fever. The doctor does not think it is going to be severe *at all*. We have sent to Memphis for a nurse; and there is a good doctor nine miles from here who comes almost every day. Mr. Danforth did not wish us to cause you anxiety by writing, but my grandfather, General Montgomery, and my aunt, Mrs. Philip Ravennel Montgomery, think that it concerns you to know. If you would wish to come, the best way would be to go to Memphis, where Cousin Sally Caldwell will meet you, and accompany you here. My aunt says you must bring warm garments, if you please, because the ride over from Laocoon is very chilly. If you have the wish to wire, send it to Mrs. R. De Grefinried Caldwell, Memphis, Tennessee, and she will telephone it us.

"Mr. Danforth has a right good colored woman

and a good boy looking after him, and we expect the nurse to-night. His pulse was 90 and his temperature fell to 101¼ this morning. The doctor says it is light, the fever, this year.

"I rest, Madam,

"Very sincerely yours,

"LEE M. K. MONTGOMERY."

Before she had finished the letter Miss Danforth was at the telephone; five minutes later she paralyzed Matilda by the calm announcement: "Matilda, Mr. Giles is very ill. I am going to Memphis to-night."

CHAPTER II

A LADY OF QUALITY

MATILDA, who accompanied Miss Danforth on her trip to Arkansas, was visibly disappointed in the South. She viewed the rich emerald sweeps of hillsides, the autumn blazonry on dogwood and hackberry trees, the greenish streakings of moss on ashen-gray trunks and the glossy foliage of live oaks with a cold moderation of approval. "Yes'm, they're pretty," she acquiesced, "but I was expecting flowers and to see oranges hanging from the trees. And I was shivery cold this morning. It's not a very sunny South to my thinking."

Agatha, however, who had been to Alabama in February, did not expect the tropics. Moreover, Agatha was an essentially reasonable human being. With lively interest she inspected the little settlements with their general stores and leisurely black and white groups at the station. The negroes she studied all the time. "Here," she thought, "is an opportunity for first-hand impressions." She had a neat note-book in which she wrote. Had one peeped invisibly over her shoulder as the train neared Mem-

phis on the second morning one might have read: "The country seems greatly changed since last visit. Evidences of prosperity. Considerable fresh paint. Wire screens being used. Negroes do not seem to be at work, but appear cheerful. Are not so ragged as I remember."

At Memphis the first sound which she heard was her own name shouted lustily by a depot porter. "Miss Danfo't, Miss Agathy Danfo't," he called, and when Agatha responded: *"I* am Miss Danforth," she found herself instantly and most cordially welcomed by a pretty little lady in widow's weeds, who had her, her luggage and Matilda taken in charge and raced them in an amazingly short space of time to another train. Agatha, who had been propelled through a dingy depot filled with white and black faces, almost at a run, only caught her breath when seated in a very clean day coach, facing her captor.

"Pray, pardon me, ma'am," said the latter, "but we barely had time to catch the train. Wally and John, get off, or you will be carried away to Arkansas!" The last to two grinning colored boys, who had stowed away the dress suit cases under the car seats very deftly. "You're checked through to Laocoon, I expect—Not? Then please give me your checks? Wally, you go a running! John, too, and get two more tickets and check these trunks through, they've just come off the Boston train. I'll find the conductor and hold the train. Make haste, now!"

She thrust the bank-note Agatha held out into the first black hand extended and flashed a smile at Agatha as she hurried away herself. Before the New Englander could protest the uselessness of trying to stop the mighty machinery of the Rock Island system with a frail, unofficial hand, she was gone, lightly tripping through the door assisted by every man whom she met in her quest. Just as the train moved she returned, checks and silver in her hand, out of breath, but radiant. "The trunks are on," she announced, "he's a very nice conductor; we only had to hold the train two minutes!"

Agatha's surprise forced itself out amid her thanks; she didn't know that the South could be so vigorous.

"Oh, we've learned to hustle," laughed the lady. She had a delightful, leisurely southern voice, but a vivid and mobile face. It captivated the New England woman with its lustrous, liquid dark eyes, the dark hair just frosting, the faint rose tint on the olive cheeks and the rapid changes of expression. When she smiled, small, milk-white teeth showed. They were a little apart in the upper jaw; and for some reason this, which might have been a defect, only imparted piquancy to her smile. Her mouth was rather large, but delicately formed. It suited her oval contour of face, her agreeable, small nose and rather high forehead. "She's a dear little Memling," thought Agatha, "except that she isn't elongated enough; but she has his pretty, slender

neck; and she's as graceful as a humming-bird; I wonder when did her husband die." The dear little Memling thought it time to introduce herself. "I don't know whether you expected me, I'm Mrs. Caldwell, General Montgomery's niece. Lee wrote me to meet you. But I wasn't sure at all this morning that I should be able to make the train. My cook was arrested and the kitchen was rather disorganized."

"Arrested?" murmured Agatha.

"Yes, ma'am." Mrs. Caldwell did not appear in the least perturbed, she might have had a habit of police visitations for any sign of agitation or surprise that she showed.

"She's such a nice creature, too; and an admirable cook," she continued, "it certainly was trying. *She* says it was somebody else stole the goods and hid them in her little house to take away her reputation; but unluckily they found her husband as well as the goods and they are pretty sure he stole the things and she is shielding him. That's the trouble with nice cooks, they are sure to have some worthless male annex! Of course she had been feeding him out of my kitchen; and the poor thing denied herself everything in the way of clothes to give him all her money which Wally says he spent on a girl in a restaurant."

"And are there many such abominable men?" said Miss Danforth.

"A good many. It's the worst of the servant

problem with us, the worthless men who belong to our women servants and live off them."

"I suppose almost all your servants are colored?"

"Almost all. The Berkelys did have a white maid for Lucy Berkely, who was a great belle, but Colonel Berkely was always popping out of his chair whenever she got up and being shooed down again by Mrs. Berkely and Lucy, and starting up to help her carry anything, and all such things, and being reproved so much that it got on his nerves and finally he said, 'For God's sake, Lucy, send off that white young lady that you won't let me be polite to, and get a decent Memphis nigger!' so they did. But the rest of us generally keep colored talent."

"And what kind of servants do they make?"

"Splendid when they are trained properly and the poorest on earth when they are not—which is most always."

By this time the topic of perennial and painful interest to housekeepers was fairly launched. Mrs. Caldwell herself had been permitted a tranquil life, except once when her gardener was shot by a jealous woman, and bled all over the best table linen, which was bleaching on the lawn; but her neighbors' kitchens had plenty of thrills. Matilda listened with wide eyes and pale cheeks as the possibilities of the African were revealed. There was the cook who made such lovely rolls and chicken gumbo and whose mayonnaise was a dream, but whose official existence was cut short with painful abruptness, by

her arrest on the charge of poisoning her last employers. She pleaded that the poison "ben only a cha'm fo' to make 'em like her an' pay her higher wages;" but the law discourages magic with arsenic, and the unfortunate charmer went to the penitentiary.

There was another cook who sang gospel songs and nearly destroyed the helper boy with a bread knife in a fit of rage; the cook who supplied a small restaurant with the overflow from Mrs. Caldwell's kitchen; and replied reproachfully, when asked why such large roasts at the butcher's appeared so small on the table, "Ole Miss, doesn't you know meat allus does frizz up in the oven?" There was the friend's butler who was so virtuous that he couldn't force his conscience to tell guests that his mistress was not at home, but was overheard to announce, "She *says* she ain't in, ma'am," yet who led a double life with two wives in separate streets, on thirty-five dollars a month; the boy who forged a check merely to show how well he could write; the house-maid who borrowed Mrs. Caldwell's gowns, and unluckily getting one of them soiled, attempted to clean it with gasolene in the kitchen, which was why she set both herself and the house afire, and joined the church in consequence, declaring "No mo' burnin's in dis world or de next fo' me!" The long procession reeled off Mrs. Caldwell's lips in the sweetest voice; alternating with the good ones, the heroine who rushed into the fiery furnace of a

gasolene explosion and saved her absent mistress' diamonds, the faithful old mammies, the wonderful butlers and coachmen in the family traditions.

"They seem to contradict," was Agatha's sole comment; to which Mrs. Caldwell returned a cheerful, "No, ma'am, I reckon not. They are all children together, that's all, good and bad."

With such converse the sprightly lady beguiled the journey. Very soon Agatha gathered that she was a widow, who lived with a widowed sister of her husband, that she had only one child, a son at the University of Virginia in his last year, and that her means were rather narrow, not that she had not enough for comfort, but she couldn't do the many things for other people that she longed to do. She was better than a guide-book about the country; but certain of her tales turned Matilda white. Mostly these had to do with the negro in his changed temper of freedom. "The bad blacks are the terror of us all," said she, "especially in the country. If a girl at school is late her father and half a dozen neighbors are out with guns. It is the specter of the South!"

Agatha could see Matilda's dilating eyes in the window, which a passing shed converted into a mirror. She took the first occasion to propose a change of seats to the other side; and begged Mrs. Caldwell not to broach any frightful subjects in her maid's hearing.

"Oh, Montaigne's absolutely safe and harmless,"

Mrs. Caldwell reassured her cheerfully. In a moment she changed the trend of talk entirely by asking: "What are you going to do about your maid's meals? A pretty, educated young white girl like that can't eat with the colored servants; and Mr. Danforth has no other."

"But I, myself, have lunched with colored gentlemen and ladies," Agatha confessed, smiling queerly.

"That was in Massachusetts," returned Mrs. Caldwell, "and they were the colored quality, so to speak. *We* couldn't do it down here; it wouldn't do. There is a class of arrogant and insolent niggroes whom such things set up unbearably; we don't dare to make the distinctions, because they wouldn't understand; freedom has gone to their heads, they are tipsy with it, equality would make them crazy drunk! That is the honest truth. We can't *risk* any social favors to the niggroes. It would be like trusting little children with firearms! Now, Miss Danforth, I wouldn't presume to advise, but I feel that po' young girl will be homesick and frightened enough without having to be thrown so much with your nephew's niggroes."

"I feel so, too," confessed Miss Danforth.

"She seems to me right well educated and very gentle and refined."

"She is," said Agatha.

"Couldn't she act as your companion and secretary as well as your maid?"

"She could; and take her meals with us," said

Agatha firmly; and she thought to herself that such a course would not be compromising with evil or abandoning her principles, while it would be a path of escape; and she proffered it presently to Matilda in the most casual way in the world. Matilda said, "Just as you please, Miss Danforth;" and the subject was dismissed. But Agatha observed a slight lifting of the cloud.

Agatha, herself, felt depressed. Mrs. Caldwell's facts wore such a palpable air of veracity. She seemed to have no smallest intention of propaganda; she was talking, Agatha recognized, of things admitted by all her world. Yet the African so humorpusly, even affectionately tolerated by her, was not the sufferer and hero whom Agatha was dreaming to help. Impatient at her own perplexity she changed the subject by questioning Mrs. Caldwell regarding the family at Montaigne.

"One gets such a meager notion of people from letters—especially a young man's letters. Please pardon my curiosity, but the Montgomerys have been so kind to my boy; I am so interested in them and I seem to know so little about them, only that the general is a wonderful man and quite blind and that his daughter-in-law was a great belle and beauty and is the kindest of women. And then there is a young lad, Lee—"

"A *lad?*" Mrs. Caldwell's politeness could not restrain her, she interrupted, "a lad? *Lee?* Why, Lee's a *girl!*"

"Oh! A girl? And you call her Lee?"

"That's just our southern fashion of naming; I expect it sounds odd to you-all. Yes, ma'am, Lee certainly is a girl, and a mighty sweet one, if she has had a queer education."

Agatha hardly heard her. How could she have blundered so? Giles had written about one grandchild who was "the nicest, queerest sort of a kid in the world and a dandy shot." That had fixed Lee's wrongful sex firmly in her mind. The "kid" was a little boy. Giles had had considerable to say about Lee: but it had all led her the same way. Lee had a trick of gentling horses, the like of which Giles had never seen before. Lee was a wonder. Why, to see that kid merely saunter up to a brute of a Texan and whisper in his ear a little, then lead him about and feed him, pretty soon get a halter over him, some day come out and call him and have the horse come like a dog—well, it was uncanny! Was one to take such a performance for a girl's? Again, Lee had shot a wild turkey, or Lee had caught a big string of fish, or Lee helped the man painting the house, or Lee bossed the carpenters while he was away. To be sure, Lee, being a girl, could do all this.

She remembered, now, that once, at least, Giles had used the pronoun; she had thought it a slip and smiled. There was no smiling for aunty now. She had been almost certain that Giles' previous misadventure of the heart must have been "ordered"

and that a little judicious association of the young people would incline their hearts toward each other and Giles would marry a girl of his own people who would be a real daughter to her—but now, but Lee! She lost a little of her companion's flowing speech in her consternation. When she recovered her attention she found that she had mechanically assented to Mrs. Caldwell's remarks about Lee's education. Was Miss Lee educated abroad? Her father was the artist, Ralph Montgomery, wasn't he?

"Why, yes, ma'am," said Mrs. Caldwell, "and Lee *was* educated abroad, if you can call it education.

"You see, Cousin Ralph Montgomery was always different. He had a different upbringing in the first place. His father and his brother Philip made great sacrifices to send him to Harvard. But when he came back he was bent on being an artist. Well, he had supported himself the last two years at college, making drawings for papers. And off he went, then, to Europe and was an artist. He certainly had wonderful talent. He was a man of God-given genius, I say. He was making a reputation, too. Why, there was one of his pictures at the Columbian Exhibition. He married a little Hungarian countess, who had lost all her fortune through confidence in some of her kin's wild schemes and had nothing left but her jewels.

"That alliance, you may imagine, didn't mend the family fortunes very much; but she certainly

was the sweetest thing. I saw her when I went to France and was completely fascinated by her. Unhappily she died when Lee, their only child, was five years old, poor dear! And then it was Ralph did such a crazy thing as never was. He was heartbroken by his wife's death and his whole soul centered in this child, whom he couldn't bear to have out of his sight, so what did he do but dress her up as a little boy, that he might take her with him to all the weird places where artists go. Nobody knew the difference, and queer sights that innocent little creature must have seen; but I reckon they did not hurt her. When she was ten years old, nine years ago that is, he brought her home, because his brother Phil was dead and the old general was growing blind. He brought with him some pictures which by all accounts must have been wonderful. I'm told one of them was exhibited in New York and crowds went to see it; and there have been articles in the papers about the others.

He took his little girl and they came to this forsaken spot in Arkansas that Phil had bought. Phil's death had sent things into confusion. It came just at the wrong time, when the bad years and the low cotton prices were dragging us all to the poorhouse. Phil had raised every cent he could and bought the plantation. He had figured that the timber on it would be worth a fortune in time. Ralph was of the same notion. In fact, he was so convinced of the value of the property that he sold all the pictures he

had which were on exhibition in New York; and he was going to let his father have the money. I don't know how much he got, but it was a heap. He cashed one draft in Memphis for three thousand dollars, and we found out, afterward, that he had cashed two others in New York. He had a queer liking for money, cash in hand, and a queer prejudice against banks—there was a bank mixed up with his wife's troubles. So what does that plumb idiot do but fetch all that money to Arkansas—at least to Memphis." She sighed.

"I begin to remember, now," said Agatha, "it was in the papers—" She checked herself, for all that she had read in the papers about Ralph Montgomery's ending was hardly fit for his kinswoman's ears.

"Yes, ma'am," Mrs. Caldwell went on in the tone of one threading the paths of her recollections carefully, lest a misstep wrong the memory of the dead, "I saw that big roll of bills. Yes, ma'am, I saw it, myself, and the Karolyi opals and all his wife's jewels. They certainly were lovely. He dined with us and after dinner showed them to me. They were in a little flat tin despatch-box. And he carried them in his hand-bag. Was there ever such a crazy confidence? My dear, he was so careless, pulled them out, never putting down the window-shade, in the brightly lighted room. You may be sure *I* pulled the shade down quickly enough. And looked out down the street, too. Poor fellow!"

She paused and sighed with the weight of an old memory. "It was November, bright, warm, pretty weather, much like to-day; and the windows were wide open. We begged him to stay with us; but he was going so early in the morning that he wouldn't; and he went off at nine, in high spirits. I heard him whistling all down the street. I never saw him alive again."

"I have forgotten," said Agatha. "Was he robbed and killed in Memphis?"

"Oh, no, ma'am. I confess I was afraid he would be. Cousin Ralph wasn't really wild, you know, but he was—different. He was right unconventional and liked queer people, and yes, he did like to gamble a little, that's the truth, but I wasn't a bit afraid he would lose all that money or any considerable amount of it, no, ma'am. Cousin Ralph wasn't a drinking man or mean, all he was likely to do was to play a few games, but the danger was some evil-minded person might see his money and follow him and rob him. But he got out of Memphis all right and he got to Laocoon safely, too. He was met by one of the niggers on the place, a man named Reuben. He lived about a mile from the big house and Cousin Ralph let him out at his own door to save him the walk back, and drove on alone. Lucky for Reuben it was that his wife and a white neighbor both saw Cousin Ralph drive off. Miss Danforth, the horses came into the stable yard without him. His old father and his brother's widow got

out a search party and they found him lying on the side of the slush, his own pistol a little way from him in the mud. He was cold and dead, with two bullet wounds on him; and there were two empty chambers in his pistol."

"Were the wounds made by the same caliber of bullets?"

"The very same."

"He had killed himself?" queried Agatha, with an irrepressible shiver.

"His father will never believe he did," said Mrs. Caldwell. "The money was gone. The jewels were gone. Unk' Ralph is certain some wicked person saw his treasure and trailed him to Laocoon; and murdered him for it."

Agatha recalled another theory but she did not broach it. Truly, whether Ralph Montgomery had lost everything in a gambling-den at Memphis, where he was seen that night, and had killed himself in remorse after he came in sight of his father's house, was no fitting subject of discourse for a stranger, therefore she merely murmured, "Did they think Mr. Montgomery shot his pistol at the murderer?"

"No, ma'am. They couldn't find any bullets anywhere. And one old woman did recall hearing two shots, but not minding, shooting's always going on in the country, she thought it was boys after quails. Oh, his own pistol killed him, sure enough, poor Cousin Ralph! But not two weeks before he lost

that pistol, and they all were hunting the house over for it. Never *did* find it, Unk' Ralph says. Ask Unk' Ralph and he will say whoever stole that pistol knew about the money and those jewels and killed Ralph Montgomery with it. That's what Lee believes, too. Poor child!"

"It must have been hard for her."

"Heartrending. The child hasn't many affections. I thought she would die. I reckon it was her revenge kept her up for a right smart time. She was going to find the wicked man who killed her papa."

"Have they never found any clue to the mystery?"

"No, ma'am. Reckon they most likely never will; for all this happened nearly nine years ago, you know. And, oh, the bitter hard time poor Unk' Ralph had growing blind, and both his beautiful strong sons dead!"

Agatha found no appropriate comment. She looked out of the window at the rank weeds in the water, at the moss splashing the tree trunks, at the shabby, slightly built, wooden houses on their stilts above the slush; and a sense of an alien and sinister land chilled her like the dank fog smoking out of the ground. She remembered her nephew's careless gossip about this very lady. Her brother had been shot down before her eyes in a ball-room and the brother's business partner had struck the assassin with an iron poker from the fire tools so effectively that he fell on the floor dead, his

limp hand striking his victim's face. Agatha felt the Northerner's unreflecting recoil from a land where bloodshed did not excite horror; and the Northerner's lack of appreciation of the rarity of such violent events. She uttered a commonplace or two of sympathy, and was glad when Mrs. Caldwell, of her own motion, strayed into the general's long and brave conflict with poverty. It appeared that he was winning and had almost paid for the place. But of course Lee had had none of the advantages of education befitting her birth. "She's been raised on the Bible and Scott's novels," laughed Mrs. Caldwell, "and she can ride, shoot and tell the truth. Yes, ma'am, and she can cook, too. Not such a bad training after all. You'll be mighty fond of Lee."

Agatha did not feel so sure that she would be fond of Lee; she let a polite smile do duty for assent and changed the subject, this time to Mrs. Caldwell's own domestic difficulties. How had she been able to get away? Or perhaps she was not the housekeeper.

"Oh, yes, I am," returned Mrs. Caldwell. "Sister Lucy is a great club woman, and doesn't like to be bothered to think about things to eat; I enjoy it. Well, I was afraid I should have to leave you at the station, but I fell back on a mighty nice colored caterer we have—alas! we had; for she is going to leave Memphis; in fact she talked to me with her hat and coat on and the hack waiting at the door. The very last thing she did in Memphis was to send

me a capable woman whom I've often had, who'll take care of the house until I get back. So I went with a clean conscience, thanks to Lily Pearl. Don't know whatever we shall do without her, but we've got to find out, for she's going to reform and lead the simple life and raise her little girl virtuously in the country."

"Does she need to reform?" asked Agatha, wondering whether Mrs. Caldwell would object to her taking notes; and feeling the need of orderly recapitulation of all this new and startling information which she was acquiring.

"Well"—Mrs. Caldwell's pretty Memling shoulders went up a little—"Lily Pearl's delightful, but I don't suppose anybody could call her sternly moral. And frankly, I don't see how she ever had any good chance to be. I believe her father was a decent black man; but her mother was the most joyously irresponsible, unmoral creature you ever beheld. She was an octoroon, pretty as a figurine and a most capable lady's maid. She did behave herself for a while, and Lily's father simply worshiped her; but he died when Lily Pearl was a baby, and she was worse than ever. Lily Pearl certainly had a weird kind of bringing up. She ran away from it herself and appeared on the plantation when she was fifteen, announcing that she had come to her grandmother to learn to cook and be good. In two months every unmarried colored man on the place wanted to marry her, and two or three of the mar-

ried ones had parted from their wives for her sake. Her grandmother is a decent old soul of the old days—she's her father's mother—and she was scandalized. But she did her best; she married Lily Pearl to the preacher. He was the plantation blacksmith, a big, handsome, strong fellow. Lily didn't want to marry him, but she was the most amiable soul and she succumbed to her grandmother's entreaties. Well, the grandmother meant well, but she couldn't have done worse for the child, for he was bad, bad!"

"And a minister?"

"Well, niggro ministers are—different," said Mrs. Caldwell dryly. "They are a queer compound. They have to have magnetism and a certain gift for leadership and be politicians in a way, too; and they are likely to have strong emotions; and they seem to think repentance is more important than not sinning. Anyway, their notions of sin are not ours. It's a venial sin to lift chickens; but it is deadly for a church member to dance; they usually don't swear, either, but the other commandments have to take their chance. This man was a grand rascal. Lily Pearl, according to all accounts, made him a good and faithful wife; but he was brutally cruel to her, and three years after their marriage she ran away to Memphis. Husband ran after her. He found her and was going to discipline her, but she found a husky defender. Husband killed the defender; and he nearly killed Lily Pearl in the mix-up; but

the police for once appeared and Husband was sent to the penitentiary. And Lily Pearl got a divorce. She said it cost her forty dollars but she didn't grudge it. Then she had a rather varied career, shunning the shackles of wedlock. She captivated a French *chef* who taught her a heap. I reckon she might have married him, for his French wife had begun suit for divorce; but Lily Pearl told him it would never do, and sent him back with his savings to his wife. He must have been a pretty decent sort of chap in some ways, for he divided the money made in the business and the sale of it, evenly. So Lily Pearl is right well off."

"And did she go on leading the—the—same sort of life?" inquired Agatha, secretly shocked, yet interested against her will.

"Why, I think she has been reformed really longer than we knew; but she's such a light-hearted, flippant baggage we-all didn't reckon she was living properly; but I've a suspicion she has been reforming ever since her children were born, soon after the Frenchman went away. There was a boy and a girl, but the boy died. The little girl must be five, now; and, all at once, Lily Pearl declared the city was no place to raise a girl and she was going back to her old grandmother, whom she had always supported, by the way, and be good sure enough! So we are left lamenting. But our loss is you-all's gain, since she is going to be your nephew's cook. And I must say you-all are in luck to have such a

respectable woman and such an adorable cook combined. I wonder, do you realize how fortunate you are!"

"You call her respectable?" Agatha could not restrain the ejaculation.

"Of course she's respectable," declared Mrs. Caldwell, opening her fine eyes, "she's perfectly trustworthy and dependable and honest. Lily Pearl could be trusted with diamonds and rubies; and she could even be trusted with cooked food; and she is really clean, loves to be clean herself; why—respectable? Lily Pearl is a lady, a dark lady!"

"But I—I thought she wasn't a—a virtuous woman."

"One doesn't expect virtue from a niggro woman," said Mrs. Caldwell easily. "You can't judge them as you do white people. It wouldn't be fair."

"I suppose not," said Agatha wearily, abandoning the subject. How dense must be the prejudice of the South, she considered; but her dejection returned. Her eyes wandered over the dreary cotton fields through which they were passing and caught the horizon, barred with half-stripped and ragged trees. Slowly the train came to a standstill, stopping in a wide plain in which was set a little town. It was a railroad crossing, and another train was drawn up at right angles on the other line.

Rows of gum trees to which still clung a richly colored foliage rose to the horizon edges or defined

the course of a sluggish thread of stream. The few low-browed houses had the curiously transient appearance which Agatha had so often remarked, but she noted a faint effort at brightening the flimsy shabbiness with new fences and new paint.

Outside the station a plank walk, in the center of a cinder path, ran a little way past the cars; and several of the passengers had taken advantage of the stop to stretch their limbs and pace up and down thereon.

Agatha saw one of these, a rather poorly clad young woman, who had a baby in her arms, let her bag slip from her fingers. A second later an athletic negro passing set his foot toward it, but before he could reach it a young yellow woman, whose comely tidiness had been pleasing Agatha's eye, stepped briskly in between. She picked up the bag.

"Oh, say," began the man, making an imperious motion, "that's mine, I seen that first—" He had the air of taking it from her by force, but recoiled with an exclamation, "'Tain't *you?*"

The woman with entire self-possession opened her large eyes a little wider and her white teeth gleamed in a languorous smile. "Well now, Lafe Meadowes, if there you ain't, mean and handsome as ever!" She spoke in the evenest, most leisurely tones, quite at her ease.

"Havin' had the honor and the happiness of havin' ben you' husband onct, would it be too much axings to ax you to shake han's?"

"D'rectly, Lafe," said the woman quietly. As

she spoke she walked swiftly away from him to the owner of the bag.

Agatha, too far away for hearing, watched with interest the pantomime of arrest, inspection, acceptance. She observed the woman's outstretched hand and the quadroon's smiling refusal of the money proffered, and she beamed unnoticed approval on the honest one even as she returned to the athletic black man.

"Which train you-all gwine take?" said he.

"I ain't quite decided. Mebbe I'll res' right here."

"Then I'll see you when I come back to-morrow. I got a right smart to tell you."

"If I'm here," returned the woman. "Well, so long, Lafe, I wish you well."

He swung himself on the train moving out; she watched him with a languid interest.

"Well, he ain't got hanged *yet,*" she observed to her girl companion, "but it's boun' to come. Good-by, Sist' Harris, I'm 'bliged to go." Embracing her affectionately, she ran to the lower car with its legend *For Colored People Only;* and Agatha could hear the ripple of laughter from conductor and brakeman which greeted her coming.

The episode put her in better spirits. She felt cheered and strengthened by this exhibit of virtue. "A thoroughly tidy, respectable, colored woman," she thought, and she couldn't resist calling Mrs. Caldwell's attention to the act.

The latter laughed. "Yes, ma'am, I saw her. She *is* perfectly honest, I do believe."

"Do you know her?"

"Of course. She's the one I have just been telling you about. *She's* Lily Pearl Rutherford."

"Rutherford?" Agatha repeated, "I've heard that name."

"Very likely. Old Colonel Steve Rutherford was a mighty man in these parts; he used to own Montaigne. A very interesting character was Uncle Steve; he called the plantation after Montaigne, the French philosopher; he had a mania for always quoting him. He was a kind of uncle of mine, and it was through us the Montgomerys bought the plantation. After his death, his son and his wife went back to Virginia, whence they came, and they live there now. Uncle Steve Rutherford was the man who cleared the country of graybacks, a pestilent sort of guerrillas who were just as mean to Confederates as to Federals; loot was *their* only aim. He ran the band down and hanged a lot of them right in this very country."

"But Lily Pearl?"

"Why, her father was a Rutherford because he belonged to the Rutherfords; he died a young man; her grandfather was a Rutherford negro way back in old Virginia."

"You don't know his name?"

"Yes, ma'am; Steven Rutherford."

Agatha felt moved and amazed at once; could it be possible that at last in this strange fashion she had found a descendant of the man to whom she had been grateful for years?

CHAPTER III

THE WAYSIDE STAINS

WHEN the train halted again, warned by Mrs. Caldwell, Agatha and Matilda, on whose face was painted a deep if sternly silent dejection, were ready to leave the car. Matilda firmly took the small hand-bag from Agatha. "The nigger'll take the suit-case," said she, as she deftly linked both Mrs. Caldwell's and Miss Danforth's bags in the palm of one clenched hand, while from the other depended her own larger bag. As for Agatha she gasped. So soon had Matilda acquired the cruel nomenclature of the country for a wronged and innocent race!

But this was no occasion for reproof. Pretending not to have heard as the easiest way out of the dilemma, Miss Danforth descended to the platform, to be welcomed at once by a tall, slender, erect gentleman with gray hair, gray pointed beard and a fresh complexion. He lifted his hat so quickly, he grasped her hand so unhesitatingly, and he stepped off so briskly toward the shabby open wagon and fine horses waiting under guard of a tall black man, that Agatha needed to glance a second time at his closed eyes to realize that they were indeed sightless.

He greeted Mrs. Caldwell affectionately for "fetching our friend," while he turned a kindly smile on Matilda, saying, "And this is the young lady, is it? You're right welcome to Montaigne, ma'am."

From that moment Matilda elected the general as the master mind of a bewildering and exasperating country, nor did her measure of the man falter on closer inspection. His worn greatcoat, his patched boots, his darned gloves might have made her pause in Massachusetts, for it can not be denied that Matilda had an eye for clothes; but not here. The coat had been brushed, the boots were carefully varnished, the gloves were neatly buttoned and whole; perhaps the general might be poor, but he was a gentleman, all right. Down South most gentlefolk were poor. His first words—even before he saw to the loading of the luggage on a second wagon—were an assurance to Agatha that her nephew was doing splendidly. Best in the world. So Agatha looked about her, relieved, making notes in her mind. November is not a show month in the South. The little village on the wide plain amid stripped orchards and ragged cotton fields had nothing to hide its untidy streets, where papers and tin cans were scattered at will, and cows and pigs roamed unrestrained. But the sides of the street were green and fresh looking; the little houses were mostly neat, and one could see, in spite of the winter bareness and disarray, that there would be pleasant gardens in the spring.

"Sorry to have you come to our country at such a time; we're a heap prettier three months later," said the general cheerily, swinging himself into his seat. "Now, Cousin Sally, I reckon you'd better drive for fear our New England friend will get too badly bounced if we let the horses take their way."

They drove along a wide, muddy street, so spacious that the slightly built, wooden houses wore the air of a diminutive toy village. Numbers of citizens carelessly attired, and many in their shirt sleeves, for the air was soft and the sun shone, were gathered at the station to meet the train; not that they had any business with it, but neither had they any other business in hand. If they didn't have business they certainly had acquaintance, for they knew all the trains by number and called to the conductor and brakeman by their names; obtaining stray bits of information regarding the stage of water on the road and at Number Ten or Number Fifteen, with which they had equally little direct concern; and sometimes picking up more personal news. To-day, as the conductor leaned out over the brake, Agatha heard him say:

"Well, old Tom's got Billy, at last." Two or three men roused into feeble animation.

"Well, *sir*," said one, "where was it at?"

"Down to the Corners; nobody heard what was said, but old Tom sung out to the barkeep; and when they all got to him Billy was all in; never did speak but one word. That was that Tom did it."

"Shot him?"

"No; Billy shot once; he'd his gun out; but old Tom just gave him one in the neck with his knife."

"Well, Billy could be plum' aggervating."

"Sure could."

If he said more the wind of the train tore the words to shreds.

Agatha could not catch the comments of the little knot of men on the platform, but as they left the station she heard a short laugh.

Then her eyes met Matilda's, widening with horror. Matilda had heard, also. She opened her lips; she shut them firmly again; she drew a deep breath; and Agatha, who had experienced a quiver of the same repugnance and terror, for some unintelligible reason felt like giggling.

Outside the little shops, the shopkeepers propped their chairs on two legs against the frail walls of their marts and smoked until a gossip or a customer appeared. They had discarded coats, to a man. A few farmers' wagons crawled through the streets; a few children played on the green roadside, squatting recklessly on the damp sod; on a tidy piazza, where the Japanese honeysuckle was still brightly green, a woman, whose white apron rippled with her motion, was rocking to and fro. She was the only active creature in the picture.

As they passed, people saluted the general in rural fashion: "Howdy, General;" "Evenin', sir, how's all, General?" or "Glad to see you out, General;

how's the folks?" or, oftener, simply, "Howdy." One woman warmed Agatha's heart with a hail of "Howdy, Gineral Montgomery; how's young Danforth gittin' on?"

She was a hard-featured, weather-beaten farmer's wife riding a moth-eaten looking mule; and she balanced a basket of eggs precariously over the pommel of her side-saddle. She wore a violent pink sunbonnet, and a faded black cotton riding-skirt.

Frankly she returned Agatha's smile. "Glad you come," said she.

A few of the older men waved their hands at their hats in a kind of salute; but the young men merely nodded and grinned. Only one man removed his hat to the ladies; his hair was white.

The general turned in his seat. "I hope these men going by have the manners to touch their hats to you, Miss Danforth, and to the young lady with you," he said; "but I fear not. The courtesy of the South is unhappily confined to the gentry; in the old days the whites were all civil and respectful to age and to ladies. Rich and poor, they were courteous; but now the poor whites think it shows their independence to be unmannerly. At least some of them do. I take it, though, most of these people are rude because they have never been taught any better. The South has lost its natural leaders, and these hill-billy curs which they have taken on in their place are not yet on to their job, as your nephew says. A most interesting and attractive young man, madam; we are much at-

tached to him. I understand you are interested in work among the negroes. He has done a great deal for our colored people."

Agatha grew animated at once; "Has he?"

"Yes, ma'am. He caught old Uncle Rube Pickens, who has had only one hen for the last two years, but sells eggs and chickens regularly; caught him in his own chicken house, if you please. 'Who's there?' he hollered. No answer. Old scoundrel lay low. 'Who's there? Speak up, you nigger, or I'll begin shooting!' he calls. Never a word. 'All right,' says Danforth. 'I see something, but if it can't talk I'll shoot. Here goes'— and out he whips his pistol—self-cocking pistol. 'Now, last call—who's there in that chicken house?' And Uncle Rube whimpers, 'Ain't nobuddy hyar but us chickens, boss!' "

"And what did Giles do?" asked Agatha, while Matilda, admiring the general, gave a queer smothered snort of mirth.

"Giles?" chuckled the general. "Oh, he suppressed his joy and hauled the old sinner out with his bag and gave him a few with his hunting-crop and let him go."

"He seems a little strenuous in his reforms, but it is hard to have chickens stolen," said Giles' aunt; "what else has he done?" It appeared that he had soundly thrashed the county bully of color and that he had nearly killed young Bud Lacy, who licked his wife, and he had thrown Big Josh, who fired a tree "out of meanness," over his head against the tree,

but his head hit the tree and nothing else, so no great harm was done.

Agatha reserved comment; she could not approve; but again she felt that it was not the psychological moment for criticism, and criticism out of time is worse than useless—it is mischievous. She preserved a polite silence, unwitting that Matilda at her side was drinking in the tales with knitted brow and parted lips, barely suppressing sighs of terror.

"But he is right kind and liberal, too," the general continued, conscious somehow, as blind people are with their sixth sense, of an emotional disturbance in the atmosphere. "He gave all the lumber for the little colored church which they built at Hope."

"Did you say Hope?" asked Agatha quickly. "Is it near here?"

"On yon side of the creek, about four miles. The people come from all about here. They call it Hope, but it is really part of Montaigne. I gave them the land, and they got a couple of carpenters—colored boys who gave their time as their donation—and pretty much all the other members gave time, working at framing the house or shingling or painting. I don't think they paid fifty dollars out for labor; but there was the paint and the seats and the melodeon. They got a colored man who begs money for churches and schools in the North to help them. He's a grand rascal, but a splendid beggar, name of Merlin—the Reverend Harry Beecher Stowe Merlin. He raised about seventy-five dollars right around here

where nobody is rich—unless it's your nephew, madam—and he raised, at least he handed in, sixty dollars from the North; and they owe some sixty-odd still."

Agatha, who had given the aforesaid Harry Beecher Stowe Merlin three hundred dollars, took a long breath.

"You say handed in, I notice, General; do you mean to infer that he didn't hand in all he raised?"

"Well, I've known that to happen, ma'am. He got five hundred once and turned in two. And he has accumulated a large property. He owns, as I am credibly informed, property to the amount of forty or fifty thousand dollars, all admirably invested."

"But doesn't he give published circulars with his accounts in them?"

"Undoubtedly. But the poor people for whom he is begging never see them. And accounts have been cooked before now, you know, ma'am."

"But do these poor people suspect nothing?"

"I reckon they know he keeps something; they must when they see how he waxes fat and kicks like what's-his-name in the Scriptures. But he gets so much more for them than anybody else could that they say, 'De laborer am wuthy of his hire,' and let it go at that."

Agatha merely made the perfunctory comment that she had not suspected such a state of things.

"Most people North don't suspect, ma'am. He's a charming scoundrel, Merlin, with the best kind of

wheedling manners, and the real darky, propitiatory tricks that are so childish they amuse you and touch you at the same time. If he ever did any begging in your town, madam, he probably would send you and other prominent ladies a very pretty, rather high-colored nosegay of flowers."

Agatha was looking away from Matilda; she couldn't be sure that the faintest, snapped-off giggle broke from that young witness' lips. She knew Matilda had placed in water two bunches of flowers proffered "in gratitude for all Miss Danforth had done for a race whose true friends were few." The general's ears had the acuteness of the blind man's; he looked back. "Did you, perhaps, get such a bouquet, Miss Matilda?"

"No, sir," answered Matilda demurely.

"Well, I did," confessed Agatha; "and he wanted to pay me a visit to tell me how much good my benefactions had done. He showed me pictures of the schools, and it seemed by accident that a picture of this Hope church dropped out. Then he told me pathetic stories of the self-denial of some of the people here to get this church. He didn't ask me for a donation, but I made him one."

"No wonder, ma'am. I made him one myself. But you need have no fears; Giles and I will see that church gets every cent you gave. He certainly is a wily and delightful old scamp. Here, madam, do you notice the burned woodland, all these charred stumps? Next year they will have them grubbed

out. Five years ago it would have made your heart ache to see the big piles of splendid gum logs just burned up, burned up, ma'am. They used to deaden the trees one year, chop them and burn them the next. Too far from the market to pay to save them, they thought; but it made me sick to look at such waste of wood. 'Wilful waste makes woful want,' is a true old saying, and we all shall be honing for our forests after we have destroyed them—to say nothing of the changed climate and the lack of rainfall and the overflows that will come in the spring along our stripped riverways!" He had turned the current of the talk; and for the first, but far from the last time, Agatha was conscious of the old southern gentleman's chivalrous tact. A lady in straits never appealed to Ralph Montgomery in vain, let her predicament be as slight or even as ludicrous as it might be.

He diverged again from the discourse to point out objects of interest by the way. Sometimes the interest was rather sinister.

"Here, Madam," he would explain, for example, "here is a cypress brake. 'Tis a lovely sight in summer; those slim straight trunks, with their spreading bases and the exquisite fernlike foliage of the trees! But now it's uncanny, with all those cypress knees that look like amputated stumps of limbs that have roughly healed over; or, as Lee used to put it when she was a little one, like the toes of buried giants sticking out of the ground. That rustly gray

brown carpet—that's the cypress leaves and cones; it does look dismal with the little pools of water shining darkly through, and the red berries flecking everything. But maybe this swamp looks more dismal than another; for years ago one of the feuds of the war was settled here; but the fate of the man who fell wasn't known until summer, when the swamp dried bone dry, and they found him, the pistol with two empty barrels tight in his hand. Then people thought they understood why Bullen sold his farm and moved to Missouri."

"Was nothing done about it?" said Agatha.

"People were too busy with more pressing concerns those days, to rake up dead and gone fights and slaughters, ma'am. No, ma'am. Bullen did come back once on a visit for a few days, but nobody molested him."

"And he? Didn't he suffer remorse?"

The general looked mildly surprised.

"I'm sure I don't know, ma'am. He seemed very pleased to be back, and looked well and hearty and had made money. If it was a fair fight, as I judge from Bullen's character it was, why should he?"

"But to take a human life!"

"Yes, ma'am; yes, ma'am; to be sure. Most regrettable," responded the general, with his invincible politeness.

"Well, I think it would be rather a relief if one had a blood feud to have the man who was hunting you safe under the ground—" this was Mrs. Caldwell.

"Don't you ever punish murder here?" said Agatha.

"Indeed we do, ma'am. Why, only last month, a man killed the marshal over to Morning Glow at half past two in the evening; and before sundown they had lynched him. When your nephew rode over to arrest him, they had just finished painting a sign to put over him."

"Why didn't they put him in jail? And wait?" objected Agatha rather startled.

"Well, ma'am, they hadn't any jail in the first place; and in the second, they were impatient. The laws delay, you know. It is unfortunate; but our system of jurisprudence the country over is scandalously impotent to punish the guilty. The only difference between the North and the South seems to me that in the North only a very atrocious or very poor and unfriended assassin is punished, and he not always, but most of those punished are punished legally; while in the South four out of five murderers (I don't say men who have killed other men, for that is a different matter, but real murderers) are punished one way or another; and the world is rid of them. But to change to a pleasanter subject, madam. Don't you think this is a good country road?"

It was a surprisingly smooth dirt road, winding pleasantly through the wood, and between fields with little bare houses set back in them among noble trees. Agatha admired it befittingly.

"Your nephew has had a king drag made, ma'am; and he lends it; and other people have made drags, too. These are comfortable little homes, madam; although they may strike you as a trifle unsubstantial; they struck me that way when I first came here from our brick farm-houses in Virginia. But you see the climate here is so kindly that a house almost like a tent affords sufficient protection, summer and winter."

"Shanties," Agatha had been terming the farm-houses which they passed, but she responded with proper sympathy: "They seem to keep them in good order, but why do they sweep the yards? Why don't they grow grass and keep it mowed?"

"Well, a mower costs money, you know; and it takes a long while to mow a yard with a sickle. There is something to be said for them."

"But—excuse me, *do* they never do anything when they sit on the porch? At every house but two the women have been sitting out on the porch in rocking-chairs and not a thing in their hands. Don't they ever sew?"

"Oh, yes, ma'am. Hardly a house that you passed but has a high-grade sewing-machine. I know, for we handle them at the store," said the general. "They? Well, madam, you make me think of a story that Senator John Sharp Williams tells. Did you ever hear him tell a story? He tells it wonderfully well; this tale is about an old negro whom he found about five in the afternoon sitting under a

tree, his hoe at his side and his furrow only half weeded.

"'Resting, Uncle?' said Williams.

"'No, sah,' said he, 'I ain't restin' 'kase I ain't tiahed; I'se jess settin' an' waitin' fo' de sun t' go down *so's I kin quit wuk!*' Well, madam, that's what these folks are doing, I reckon." The general smiled; he did not laugh often. "But the air is surely good for them. See, madam; see, Miss Matilda, you'll have to look to the left, there are the roofs of Montaigne. The line of forests belongs to the place and beyond that waving ridge of sycamores and willows is the Black River. It winds like a tangled skein. Here, not a stone's throw is the big bay where they had a skirmish once with guerrillas. That was when old Colonel Steve Rutherford lived, who is now in Heaven. He rid the country of the guerrillas. And here"—his voice changed and dropped. "No doubt you have heard of my son's death. It was there on the edge of that slash we found him. Yes, ma'am. We are near the old bridge, are we not, Sally? There where you see that clump of gum trees with the bone-white sycamore in the midst. The slash is called Treasure Slash because there is a legend that the graybacks buried their treasure there in war time. It was the scene of a grisly tragedy once; and the negroes are terrified to go near it after dark.

"My son had a large sum of money with him; and also the jewels which had been his wife's.

My own theory is that he was spied on in Memphis by some one who followed him secretly to the plantation, shot him from behind, and plundered him." The blind man's sightless eyes turned toward Mrs. Caldwell. They could not possibly detect the color mounting her cheek; yet she averted it, visibly embarrassed, almost distressed. With that exquisite susceptibility which is born with his affliction the general had noted her almost imperceptible movement. A little quiver of a smile stirred under his gray mustache, a bitterer smile than Agatha had thought could come to the benignant old mouth. "Perhaps it is hoping too much," he said, "but I still hope that God will grant me the truth about my son's death."

Mrs. Caldwell's lips opened, and noiselessly shut again. It was to Agatha's thinking as if she had tried to echo his prayer and for some reason recoiled from the utterance. "It does seem dreadfully cruel for you-all," she cried instead, "and such a genius as he had! It was recognized, too, wasn't it, Miss Danforth?"

"It was indeed," agreed Agatha. She was a little surprised at her own fervent intonation, a little daunted over her own sympathy; she blushed at Mrs. Caldwell's quick glance of gratitude.

"Yes, ma'am, I know," said the old man, "I'm thankful for that. This is the bridge. Treasure Slash is just beyond."

The horses' hoofs had a hollow ring on the loose

board flooring. Agatha looked at the black water into which the high banks dipped and behind the black cypress trunks on the edges of the tiny lake, the western sky was smouldering, blood-red.

As she gazed a huge black bird sailed above the tree-tops into the dim blue sky.

"That's a turkey-buzzard," exclaimed Mrs. Caldwell; then with a significant eye-blink at Agatha she pointed her finger at a green patch by the side of the black water. Agatha understood. So did Matilda; she caught a sob in her throat, "Oh, ain't it a lonesome place!" she cried almost inaudibly. But the general heard; he said in his gentle voice: "Yes, Miss Matilda, I am always glad when I have passed it."

Mrs. Caldwell became suddenly and nervously attentive to the road. Had they repaired the bridge? She was very glad. Didn't Miss Danforth think that a fairly good rural school-house? This roused the general, who pointed out the little white school-house on a knoll. It had green blinds and looked trim and neat; but there was no piazza about it, no shrubbery or flowers. "Give us time," said the general, "we'll get to vines and flowers directly; but we have to get modern seats and blackboards first. We have very wise and far-sighted school laws in Arkansas. You remember that great rascal, Napoleon, made a fine code for France. The Code Napoleon is a wonderful feat in jurisprudence; similarly, those unscrupulous carpet-baggers passed some very

good school laws. Here is something of another type. See that commodious farm-house with the piazzas and big barns and the rose-bushes in the front yard; there is the new South; a Georgia man lives there, Tabbert his name is, a mighty good sort—he owns the place. Over there is our division line. Montaigne begins at the cross-roads. There's a cabin of the old style. I regret to say it belongs to us." The house indicated was a two-room affair with a stick and dirt chimney perilously inclining away from its crooked gable. There was only one window, and this had its light-giving power diminished by old stockings in two of the window panes.

But the smoke was pouring cheerily out of the precarious chimney and the open door revealed four little woolly heads close to the stove on which something crackled and sent forth savory hisses of steam. A woman left the stove, spoon in hand, to peer out of the open door. She did not look equipped for cooking, wearing no apron and a plaid woolen frock trimmed with coarse white lace, but the smears on the gay garment showed that she had been the cook.

The general motioned Mrs. Caldwell to halt.

"Well, got settled, Mirabel?" he called. "I see you saved the cook stove anyhow and a frying-pan."

"No, sah," returned the woman grinning. "I didn't save nary but only the stove. Miss Lee done hunt that skillet up fo' me. Nary feather bed saved, needer. The fire hit come so terrible sudden and we

all was asleep. Tom, he jes' grabbed us all up and got us out and the neighbors bein' so fur off we'd a mighty hard time. But we done save the orgin, sah!" She beamed with pride.

"How did you do it?"

"Well, *sir!* I don't know myself, only Tom an' me an' Judy Crocket and May Liza Crocket was a visitin' we-all; an' we got it out, an' this dress was on it so it got saved tew; but it an' some cheers was all we cyared out. The heat stove, it done went, but the cook stove wasn't done much damage to. But t'other ben all twizzled up."

"Well, I'm sorry. This is mighty hard on you; and it is rather hard on us, having that good house burn down."

"It sho' is!" said Mirabel with a fine impersonal air of sympathy, "we cert'ly was proud of that house. But it ben lucky it happened yistiddy stiddier next wek, fo' I does heah they gwine t'ar this down next Monday."

"Well, don't you burn this house down, Mirabel; for you'd have to take to the fields," chaffed the general in farewell. Mirabel watched them go, grinning.

"How did they set the other afire?" inquired Mrs. Caldwell, "lamp without any chimney?"

"Not this time; they bought a new cabinet organ; and they hadn't room for it and their stove, too, if they put the stovepipe into the chimney; so they calmly moved the stove across the room, made a

hole in the ceiling, and ran the stovepipe through the hole, making for the roof. Unfortunately they had miscalculated—they never measure. The stovepipe was too short. But they left it in the clearstory between the ceiling and the roof; and went happily to bed with a roaring fire. Natural laws did the rest!"

"And then, of course, they saved the organ?"

"Of course. They always save the piano or the organ; and let the other things go."

"Had you insurance?"

"Yes, ma'am; but I hardly feel that we can claim it—under the conditions."

"They'll give it to you; they won't question anything; you insure with them such a heap of things."

"That's why I shouldn't feel like claiming anything," the general objected, smiling.

"Yes, sir, I understand," said Mrs. Caldwell; "but honestly, I don't think you need feel that way; they charge a terrible rate just because they know the risk of colored renters; you leave it to Daniel Murray, the agent."

"I wouldn't want to tempt Daniel, who is an awfully good friend of mine, to do anything false to his duty. No, ma'am, I reckon we'll have to charge it up to profit and loss."

"And have these poor people lost their little all of worldly goods?"—Agatha turned a conversational switch on her own account, thus relieving the general of a defense of his moral convictions to a

lady, which would have been a strain on his gallantry; he looked gratefully at the New Englander. "I fear they have," said he.

"But what will they do?"

"Expect us to sell them more than they had before and wait a long day for payment," answered the general dryly, "and all their kin and friends will crowd in on them to sympathize and eat the new supplies. And we shall build them a new house, for Tom is a first-class fellow. But Mirabel's no force and she has a huge crowd of kin who borrow Tom's money and eat up his meat and are generally on his back."

"How do you find the colored people as tenants?"

"Best kind, usually; only they won't take any care of their houses. But agriculture is the work for the niggro. It has variety. I don't believe they will be any good for the manufactures, cotton or steel. It is too monotonous. They get tired and quit. They like to work three days in the week and loaf four; and they can't compete with people who work six. Same with the other trades. The Greeks are running them out of the bootblacking business. When I was down in Little Rock last week a Greek blacked my boots. I didn't like it."

"Generations of dependence and childish lack of forethought can't be undone so soon, I suppose," ventured Agatha; and it surprised her to catch the general's sigh before he replied: "I'm afraid instead of undoing we are making matters worse; but,

come, there are mighty good darkies left. Did you know, Sally, Lily Pearl was on your train?"

"Is *she* so good?" Agatha's question followed hard on Mrs. Caldwell's assent.

"A perfect treasure, ma'am; and your nephew gets her. She's to cook for him."

"And is Lucy gone?" asked Mrs. Caldwell.

"She left last week, Thursday. Tobias got after her with a razor; and she said she wouldn't take that from no man. Lee heard the screeches and ran over—I was out on the plantation unluckily—and she took the razor away from Tobias; but Lucy couldn't be appeased, and she left in the night. No word except what she had said the night before."

"Isn't that like them!" Mrs. Caldwell laughed and sighed in a breath. "But, do you know, I was surprised to hear that Lucy was leading a gay life."

"Merlin is an engaging scoundrel," said the general, shrugging his shoulders; "but if Tobe once gets on his trail there will be bloodshed. I gave the reverend scoundrel a hint and I reckon he has left all right. I'd hate to have old Tobe get into trouble; he's a good sort."

"Well, Lucy was a good cook; but she never would learn the new way of raising bread with quick yeast; and I always had an uneasy notion she took the sponge to bed with her winter nights to keep it warm."

"Lily Pearl is another sort."

"Indeed she is! Lily Pearl is a great artist! I'm

told she can make one hundred and fifteen kinds of soup—and soup is *so* important in typhoid. Miss Danforth, welcome to Montaigne."

Agatha's eye first caught the flash of water, then it traveled to the right, up a gentle rise of ground over fields where cattle grazed amid the brown cotton stalks, to green hedge-rows of honeysuckle and privet and late blooming roses about an old-fashioned, spacious, planter's house, with double-storied verandas and a wide gallery running through the center. The gallery below had a lattice wall masked with luxuriant honeysuckle and trumpet vines. About the mansion clustered the offices at decent intervals of space, the ice-house, the spring-house, the poultry yards, the servants' cabins in their wee gardens; and to the rear glowed velvet green pastures. The outbuildings were whitewashed, but the house itself sorely needed paint. However, everything was tidy; the yards were neatly raked, the garden laid in order for winter, and the fences, if patched, were trimly erect. On the steps of the platform to the side which served as porte-cochère stood two figures, a dark-haired woman in widow's weeds, and a slim young girl. The girl's long dark braids hung between her thin shoulders; she had very bright dark eyes, a large mouth and white teeth and a deep dimple in a tanned cheek. She wore a bright plaid silk waist which did not fit so well as it might and a rather rusty-looking, short, black silk skirt. Both were smiling and fluttering their handkerchiefs.

"Ah, daughter, ah, Lee, child, how's all?" hailed the general, taking off his hat. Agatha wondered how, without sight and before they had spoken, he could know of their presence. She glanced quickly at Lee. Her only impression was of a featherdown lightness of motion, flashing eyes and a plain, mobile, brown face. How ridiculous it was to have worried sentimentally about any peril from that plain child!

The general presented the ladies and inquired for Giles in a breath.

The older woman—"My daughter, Mrs. Philip Montgomery"—recited a little speech of greeting evidently prepared with care: "Welcome to Montaigne, Miss Danforth; I rejoice to inform you that your dear nephew is doing as well as we could possibly hope, and his pulse is only ninety-two, temperature, of course, higher at this time in the afternoon; but only one hundred and two and three-fourths, which is low for typhoid."

The young girl simply held out a shy hand, curtsied in a prim foreign fashion, as Agatha had seen French damoiselles, *bien elevée,* curtsy, shrinking sidewise behind their serene and animated mothers. All she said was, "It is a great pleasure to meet you, Madam." Then she nodded shyly at Matilda, and asked in beautiful French, "And you, mademoiselle, you are madam's secretary? Perhaps a French woman?" Matilda took Agatha's breath away by stammering amid blushes while she limply shook

the frankly proffered hand, *"Pas de tous.* I'm just American, Miss Montgomery." Matilda, it afterward appeared, had been assimilating French lessons while Miss Danforth took them, though she seemed to be doing nothing more intellectual than running narrow ribbons into fine underwear. Thus had she picked up a considerable smattering of phrases; in fact, it was her ambitious intention to reply entirely in French, but her courage hung fire at the moment. Lee, seeing some one more embarrassed than she, some one young like herself, looked at her with friendly eyes and smiled again.

"The Southerners ain't a bit haughty," thought Matilda, "and her mother a countess, too!" Matilda hoisted Lee side by side with the general on a pedestal of gratitude.

Mrs. Caldwell was assisted to descend and Lee jumped into her place. The horses, with a resigned shake of their heads, trotted out of the yard through the gate held by a grinning black boy; and across the shady road.

Giles had taken the former cottage of the overseer. He had turned it with a slight expenditure of money and much ingenuity into a bungalow with a garret a half-story high for coolness, and a screened balcony aloft reached by an outside staircase. The house wore a pleasant air of seclusion and repose with its garniture of roses and honeysuckle and the garden in front of it where a sun-dial shone whitely. A great willow drooped its branches far over the

broad eaves of the roof. In the distance, an etching of Virginia creeper and euconymous vines covered the slender white limbs of the steel windmill tower. There were iron lamps on the tall posts of the gateway which had cement bases; and a hydrant perked a blunt green nose through the shrubs edging the drive.

"Modern luxuries; acetylene gas and water, you see, Madam," the general proclaimed in pride beyond disguise.

Here was no lack of fresh paint; in fact the gloss was still on every board. The boy at the gate contrived to murmur to Lee, "Miz Rutherford comin' down the road this minute, ma'am; we done sent out fo' her an' dat's her comin' now!"

Hardly heeding, for she was thinking only of her boy, Agatha greeted a speckless and formal being in blue and white stripes and voluminous apron with a towering narrow cap, whom Lee introduced as Miss Dermott from Canada; and followed her breathlessly across the hall, which had been the gallery, into a sunny room, gay with the chintzes which she herself had selected, where a pale, smiling face lay on the pillow, and Giles' voice rose joyously, "Aunty and Lily Pearl the same afternoon! *Now,* I'll get something to eat. Sorry to make you come, Aunty; truly, I didn't mean to do it; but I'm awfully glad to see you!"

She was making a reply in the same light vein, dissembling the shiver of pain which his changed

looks cost her, when there rose a din of welcome and laughter.

The nurse sprang up and would have hastened out to hush it; but Giles checked her. "Don't you mind, Miss Dermott, I know what it is, it's nothing but the best cook in the country driving up to my humble door and all the house is out to welcome Lily Pearl Rutherford. Aunty, I just want to say one thing in your ear; be a bit easy with the colored brother and especially with the colored sister."

"I don't think you need be afraid of my being unjust to the colored people, Giles," said Agatha.

"Oh, I know you have given them oodles of money; but, Aunty, there's a heap of difference between benefacting niggers and having them work for you. Be easy on them, they are just children too old to grow up—"

"Mr. Danforth"—Giles twisted his head at the severe, prim tones and turned his grin to the wall—"I think it is time for you to go to sleep."

Agatha, with no answer to his words, kissed him and went away; but she was to ponder them, often, in the months to come.

CHAPTER IV

GILES

AGATHA sat by her nephew's bedside. The fever had broken and the patient was making his nurse's life exciting by demanding food on entirely novel grounds, sanitary and medical. Somewhere in the wide range of miscellaneous reading which he had done in college, Giles had read certain startling theories of the proper treatment of typhoid.

"There's a doctor in Toronto feeds his typhoid cases on potatoes," he would insinuate, "and he has *great* success."

"Well, *I'm* not going to risk a relapse with any such experiments," replied Miss Dermott firmly. She was not imaginative and her sense of humor had long since been crushed by the trials endured by a plain young woman in a hospital full of young internes.

"Relapses?" Giles scouted, "Oh, my! Can it be possible that you hold to that effete idea? Let me explain; typhoid is entirely a colonization problem. The bacteria of typhoid have a little trick of emigrating to quite a new locality and there they raise large

families which grow in about ten days big enough to take their evil part in the world. See? Patient seems to be getting well. Give the poor man, famished as he is, something to eat! You do? Well, whether you do or you don't, the infant bugs get a going. Relapse and that rot about re-infection! I tell you, Miss Dermott, there's no such thing! No, ma'am, the antitoxin factory hasn't turned out enough goods to supply the demand, that's all. Piffle, I tell you, lady, piffle,—like the inhuman nonsense about cold packs and ice baths. Aunty, I am starving!

" 'Give me three grains of corn, Aunty, give me three grains of corn,
'Twill keep the little life I have till the coming of the morn.' "

In this fashion he scandalized the nurse, and made all the others laugh. He had declined with every evidence of sincerity to take the cold packs. "They will congest me somewhere, I am certain," he declared, "and then I'll have hemorrhages and die and you'll wake up windy nights and think, '*There* was a patient that I might have saved! He knew better than I.' No, ma'am, take that stuff away and those sheets!" Then, Miss Dermott would show signs of distress; and he would relent; and Lee would be summoned as timekeeper and Giles would call out, "Fetch on the tortures!" But as Miss Dermott confessed in deep anxiety to Miss Danforth, "He seems

so exhausted afterward and doesn't show the reaction that he ought, although his temperature went down a whole degree and his pulse was stronger. But he seemed almost delirious, Miss Danforth, kept muttering messages as if—as if he were dying; and —oh, Miss Danforth, it was just pathetic, he—he would say what a good nurse I am; 'Don't lay it up against her!' he says, 'such a nice girl and such a good nurse, and so pleasant to look at! Excuse me repeating all this, but it is such a great responsibility!"

Now, Miss Dermott was plain to a degree; and Agatha had her own opinions about her nephew's delirium. But she had her own opinion about cold packs in typhoid, also; and she simply said, "Perhaps we can manage to give him a bath in another way. Miss Lee and I have been talking of running a rope through a large rectangle of this white oilcloth they have at the store to cover tables, and we can draw the sides up and make a kind of bath-tub, with the patient inside; afterward we can syphon the water out and roll him over on the other side of the bed. This way he can have a tepid bath to begin with, which we can cool down gradually, so it will not be such a shock. Let us try. Tobe and Nick can move him."

Thus did Miss Dermott obtain her first idea of the easy bath for typhoid which was later to win her much commendation from an eminent physician, and gratitude from her patients.

Agatha thought of the bath; but Lee found the materials and overcame all the practical obstacles.

"Isn't the kid a crackerjack?" Giles laughed, "she'll make good anywhere. Even Miss Dermott likes to have her round."

Miss Dermott liked nothing of the kind. Her idea of the immediate family of the patient was an unreasonable and agitating element to be kept as far away as their tempers would allow. She always hid the history card from their unhallowed curiosity. She knew nurses who pandered to the anxiety of the family, and put the card in a position of access; not Honoria Ellen Dermott; she despised such weaklings; she never answered any questions that she could evade, she never had opinions; and she kept the family in their place—which was outer darkness.

Here, however, she was unable to enforce regulations, especially with Lee, who provided her with all her little comforts, made her history cards on Giles' type-writer in red and black with exemplary neatness when her own supply, according to the invariable custom of nurses, gave out, midway in the case; and who took charge of the diet kitchen, to the vast improvement of the diet; for Miss Dermott was a good nurse but not a cook. So, by degrees, Lee was tolerated. Finally, she became the relief nurse who stayed with the patient while Miss Dermott took her conscientious hour of exercise. Long, long afterward, Lee told Giles that those were awful hours to her, because Miss Dermott had enlightened her as to

every possibility and turned her cold by always adding to her directions: "Remember to wave out of the window in case of hemorrhages!"

But nothing had happened; and steadily Giles grew stronger.

He could sit in the big Morris chair and see his foreman every morning and give directions. And he began to dictate letters to Lee at the type-writer.

"Awful pity the kid isn't a boy, isn't it?" he would say sometimes to his aunt. At peace regarding Lee's power of charm Agatha let herself like the child, whose humility disarmed her. She had confessed her deficiencies of wardrobe to Matilda first and Matilda had helped her sew. Lee loathed her needle. Cousin Sally had brought her a pretty frock, as was Cousin Sally's delightful habit; and she had left her some fashion papers. When Cousin Sally went away in a few days, she felt cheered regarding Lee, whose indifference to the arts of the toilet had been a gnawing worry to her; Lee really showed an interest, and she began to reckon up the years. "She is nineteen," said Cousin Sally to Miss Danforth, "my word! who would guess it! Why, I was married on my nineteenth birthday."

Agatha, who knew nothing of Lee's former scorn of the arts of the toilet, saw nothing surprising in her new interest.

But this day, as Agatha sat by Giles' big chair, Lee appeared with her hair done up. Matilda had arranged it, and Matilda had put a few knowing

touches on the frock which Mrs. Caldwell had brought. The sun was going down as Lee entered and the glow flooded the room. It transfigured the girl's face; for a moment, there in the doorway with her soft gray dress and rose ribbons and the light brimming her eyes, she was not a child but a charming woman. But Giles frowned. He demanded: "What have you been doing to your hair?" His voice was gruff.

"It's marceled," responded Lee, the light fading from her eyes, "don't you like it, Monsieur Giles?"

"Cut it out, Kid; I like the braids a heap better."

Lee bit her lips and winked hard as she walked to the window. *"Il fait pluie, je pense,"* she said, looking out, the back of her pretty head to them. In a moment she made an excuse and left them.

"You have wounded her feelings, Giles," said Agatha reproachfully.

My young lord stared. "Not the kid," he flouted, "she doesn't get peeved so easy. She's game as a boy; and I'm not going to have her pick up tricks like those snippy Boston buds!"

Gladys Vassall, she whom Giles was never going to forget, was a Boston bud. Agatha smiled to herself, and changed the subject. "Giles," she said suddenly, "do you know the story of Lee's father?"

"I've heard it," Giles replied with unusual gravity.

"Will you tell it to me?"

"I never talk about it," said Giles. "You've heard of it through Mrs. Caldwell, I reckon."

"She wouldn't tell me, of course; yet somehow I suspected something; the general spoke of him; do you think he was killed, or did he kill himself?"

"That is what other people think. Lee doesn't know of the gossip; I hope she never will; but I reckon the old general has picked it up. What people say under their breath is that the yarn about the assassin is all hot air. Poor Montgomery was seen with some queer guys in Memphis. He did gamble in France, a little. He seemed excited if not intoxicated. The idea is that he lost the money in some disgraceful way and lost the jewels, too; and when he got on near home, it was more than he could stand to confess and bear their disappointment, so he shot himself."

"Were there powder marks on him as if he had put the pistol against his body? There would be."

"There were powder stains in one of the wounds, not in the other, but he was lying on the damp ground, which might have washed them off."

"I see; and no one was ever arrested?"

"No stranger was seen about the place or the neighboring towns. It could hardly have been any of the people here; the general thinks it was some one who followed him from Memphis. But no such person has been discovered. It's a dreadful thing; and the lack of that money has cramped the Montgomerys awfully. But they will come out all right. Perhaps we may find the buried treasure. Did you know we have a treasure and a haunted cypress slash

where it is hidden? Oh, we're no slouches in the spook line, I can tell you."

Agatha's note-book was out in an instant and she was begging him for the tale.

"It's a pretty tough legend," Giles explained, "I never realized until I came here what part superstition plays in a negro's life. I didn't more than half take in about those infernal voodoo doings—"

"Surely you don't have such horrible rites here?"

"Don't we? You just listen. This pretty incident happened in old Colonel Rutherford's day. His own man came to him, one morning, taking on and crying out loud, because a hoodoo man had kidnapped his baby. Wanted it in his business. You've read about the ghastly things they do with babies. I've the thing a bit mixed up, but as well as I can recall, a negro woman, suspected of being an intimate of the sorcerer, said she had seen it playing on the river bank; but she shooed it away and told it to go home. So people supposed it had fallen in the river; but this fellow, *he* was dead to rights sure it had been kidnapped, so he and his master went after the conjure man. The old rascal swore by all that is holy that he hadn't a thing to do with the kid; never set eyes on it to know it, and so on; and they say he held up his wicked old hands to the sky and prayed if he didn't speak the truth that he might then and there fall over backward into the swamp and die! Well—he *did!* Had some kind of a fit and fell over. Anybody else would have been

fished out; but the story runs Colonel Rutherford had been up to his cabin and found some kind of ghastly evidence that he had made way with the baby and some people say that he showed this to the fellow and it gave him the fit. Anyhow, though he was the kindest old boy alive, he never lifted a finger.

"Nobody else did, either; and the old devil rolled over in the mud and muddy water not two feet deep, and drowned. Nobody would fish him out to bury him; that night was the big overflow and the whole place was covered with water. But he was never seen again. Some people think that his body floated down the river. Where he fell is a little inlet —we name it a bay. The darkies, however, are all firmly convinced that the old wretch is still there, and just out of meanness is guarding the gray-backs' loot, which, tradition has it, is buried in the slash. Even the white folks are afraid of the place and won't fish there. Grisly stories have grown out of it all. The darkies believe that the ghost, having been a big hoodoo man, still is powerful; and it's death or long sickness for any one to see the spook; and violent and awful death should any one touch the corpse. And naturally what happened to Ralph Montgomery confirmed all the strange notions they have."

"But why? What had his murder to do with the slash?"

"A right smart. I reckon Mrs. Caldwell didn't tell

you that they all had a plan to hunt in that same Treasure Slash on the Sunday following poor Montgomery's death. Well, they had; and you see what happened. They found him there Saturday night. After that you couldn't get a soul, black or white, to go by that spot, night or day, except a-running!"

"I think *I'd* like to go and hunt," said Agatha musingly.

"When I get well, I'll take you," said Giles.

A little later he began to fret because Lee had not come in with his egg-nog.

"I dare say she will not come, after what you said to her," said his aunt. "I know if I were she it would be a long while before I visited such an ungrateful and rude young man—"

"Oh, cut it out, Aunty," exploded Giles, "you don't mean Lee really—why, Lee knows she's my chum; I like her as much as a boy. I think girls' feelings are like egg-shells, you can't touch them but they crack. I thought Lee had more sense! I'm disappointed in her," said Giles severely.

He flung his sunny mane off his forehead and sat up more erect. His aunt looked at his wasted figure and the lean arms on the counterpane; she thought that his dogged jaw showed more than ever; and his imperious gray eyes glowed with new and keener luster.

Illness had only intensified the energy of his face, its resolution and eager strength; all at once it came to her: "Here's a man who will be a power some

day." She recalled Giles' college career, how he had breezily outraged every Harvard tradition in the beginning; how he had presented himself as a candidate for the 'Varsity foot-ball team, and so disgusted the athletic magnates by his careless audacity that he was shoved aside and only in an emergency and as a desperate chance tried in the last half of a losing game. "Go in and do some of the fine stunts you expected of Brand and Jerry," growled the coach. "Sure I will," responded Giles gaily. And he was as good as his word. He won the game. But having really done something his comrades were amazed that he did not boast.

He made the team; he made the coveted societies. He made warm friends. "You see," one of them expressed it, "Giles isn't really a blowhard; he knows what he can and what he can't do as well as any man; but he says out what other fellows keep to themselves, but think just the same."

Agatha was first shocked, then amused by the boy; then, like every one else, she began to like him. But she had never taken him seriously; now she felt a dash of the chill that creeps over the elders when they realize for the first time, that the younger generation is stepping on to the stage, taking their places.

And poor Lee, whom he had wounded so lightly? She knew how Lee had spent the whole morning over that derided toilet. She had caught the quiver of Lee's lip. She— A wild cow-boy yell rent the air.

Giles leaned far out and waved his handkerchief and yelled in his feeble voice, too.

"Merciful man!" gasped Agatha Danforth, for there, riding around the drive at full speed with never a sign of saddle, was Lee on the wild Texan pony which Giles had bought but never had broken. Her long black braids streamed in the air. She rode astride, in her khaki riding-habit. A scarlet handkerchief was knotted round her throat. Opposite the window she brought her pony to an abrupt halt, leaned over his neck and whispered in his ear. The horse stood perfectly still. Lily Pearl and Tobias came out of the kitchen door, Lucille, the other maid, halted timorously within shelter. "Bring him some sugar, will you, Lily Pearl?" called Lee. "He's a good pony, now."

"Did you break him, Kid?" Giles shouted out of the window, "it's the Man Eater, sure enough; and he's all right?"

"Voyez-vous, Monsieur? Regardez! Does not he look amiable—*bien gentil?"*

"Lee, you are the dandiest horse-breaker in the country! I make you a present of him. He's *your* horse."

"But why?"

"Because you're my best friend and comrade in the South, that's why."

Agatha smiled; it was so like Giles, this oblique reparation.

"There!" said Giles, "you see. She didn't mind a bit. I mean about what I said, this afternoon."

Agatha merely smiled again and patted his hair in one of her rare caresses; but she thought she knew how a girl's eyes look when they have been doctored to look right after a fit of tears.

CHAPTER V

'AGATHA HUNTS THE HA'NT

AGATHA was writing her regular letter to Henrietta Williams. When they were away from home the friends wrote to each other on the first Sunday of each month. She wrote on the type-writer which she had had sent to her because Henrietta was to guard the letters for future reference, this not being a mere pleasure trip, but an opportunity to acquire vital information. On the desk before her lay the pages written the day before:

"DEAR HENRIETTA—I hope the picture postals and my first letter will have told you all the main facts; and now I will take you at your rash word and describe my surroundings in detail. I fear my pen turns garrulous in strange scenes without so much excuse; and the type-writer chatters worse than the pen! I told you Thursday I should dine at the Montgomerys that evening. Well, I did.

"Now that the fever is broken and Giles convalescing, the general insisted on our making a little *festa*. I have told you that I am quite carried away with the general, and you have his picture on the

postal; but there remain his daughter, Mrs. Phil, that famous belle and beauty, and his only grandchild, Lee. The house you would find interesting and pathetic. Such a medley of a few really lovely old Sheraton and Empire things, with early Victorian puerilities and cheap modern ugliness. And on the walls hangs a huge oil copy of the *Sistine Madonna,* which would make Raphael weep bitter tears, brought from Rome by the general's father at a time when a journey to Europe meant something, and religiously treasured in the family ever since. Mrs. Phil washes the heavenly host once a year, herself, with borax and water; and when occasion offers Lee and she gild the colossal frame. You can't think how between them they make the awesome thing shine! Also there are yellow old steel engravings of Washington Irving among his friends, and General Robert E. Lee (several portraits, each worse than the other), and Prince Albert and Queen Victoria in a particularly smudgy impression; and cheek by jowl with these two or three sweet old French colored prints and some excellent photographs of poor Ralph Montgomery's pictures.

"He really was great. Oh, how I wish I had one of those pictures! Such felicity and purity of line, such power of selection so that one gets what the artist saw with no clutter and confusion of detail; such a *true* feeling for light and clouds—do, Henri-

etta, dear, let me know if you ever hear of one of those pictures in reach.

"And look at me, here, forgetting all about Mrs. Phil. Well, dear, she was a belle, and she is a beauty still—a handsome, delicately tinted, graceful woman, with a charming figure and a manner of delightful repose. Otherwise, she has what some Frenchman, I think Théophile Gautier, calls a 'robust and virtuous mediocrity.' Her conversation is bromidic to a degree. You can always tell what she will say on a given theme because you have heard so many people say it before. But there is every sign that she is an admirable housekeeper, and our little roast pig dinner was delicious.

"Then, there is Lee. Lee has been brought up on the Bible and Scott's novels and the open air. She has never been away to school. Her only tutors have been an exiled French gentlewoman, who inherited a small fortune and went back to France, and her grandfather. He taught her to ride, to shoot and to tell the truth. I don't think the lady could have taught her very much except French and some impracticable French etiquette. Mrs. Phil taught her housewifery. Uncle Isaac, the old coachman, the cook's husband, taught her a deal about horses; and Lee has taught herself a smattering of carpentry, painting and—plumbing. And, oh, my dear, the difference when you don't have to pay plumbers, only to pay for the things they plumb with! I should

hate to tell you the sum paid for the Montgomerys' bath-room; it would harrow you too much!

"Lee isn't pretty. She is small and so tanned I haven't any idea whether she has a fair skin or a dark; but I imagine that it is fair. Her aquiline nose is too large for her little oval face; and so is her mouth, although it is daintily formed, and when she smiles, what with her teeth and her dimples, it seems beautiful. She has fine eyes and fine long, thick, dark hair, with a pretty white part down the middle of her head and two braids hanging between her thin shoulders. She is quite unconscious of herself, and not at all a young lady; in fact, her movements have a lack of premeditation rather startling at times. Sometimes she comes properly through our gates, more often she vaults over them with a handspring. Don't think, however, for a second, that Lee is a hoyden; she is the most modest mannered and respectful-to-her-elders little person in the world.

"Lee's first remark that day, to me, that is, her first 'off her own bat,' as my slangy Giles would say, was made when Mrs. Phil had left the room for a moment; she looked at me with a shy glance and a blush, and said: 'Will you write in my book, please ma'am?' I do love the southern ma'am; it sends me straight back to Cranford. But what do you suppose was the book? Not an autograph book, but a pallid leather volume, over which sprawled tarnished gilt-arabesques encircling the words in fat script: 'My preferences.'

"Are they too early Victorian for you to remember, Henrietta, those pages on which we recorded our favorite hero, or favorite heroine, our favorite flower, the virtue most admired, the quality most detested by us; and all the rest of our tastes, loves and aversions? I took advantage of my filling a page to look backward to Lee's own page. Maybe you think Lee's favorite is the great soldier whose name she bears, but he isn't; he is only second choice. Her hero is 'my father, Ralph Montgomery, Junior.' 'My grandfather is also a hero,' she said quite simply, 'but I could not put him down because he is living. Some books have both kinds, but this is cousin Sally Caldwell's book; and it has only those who are dead.' Lee's favorite heroine is Mary Queen of Scots, and her favorite heroine in fiction is Rebecca in *Ivanhoe,* with Di Vernon in *Rob Roy* a good second. Her favorite hero in fiction is Claverhouse. Her favorite poem is *In Memoriam,* and her favorite poet is Tennyson. She dislikes above all things to have to 'wear fashionable clothes all the time' which made me think of the Mennonites and their 'dressing fashionable'; but I have discovered that it really means 'stays,' with which Mrs. Phil would gird her to 'give her a shape.'

"The virtue dearest to Lee is keeping one's word, and the most abhorrent qualities in a friend are insincerity and cowardice—which *are* bad. Having thus been admitted to her confessions you must, now, surely know Lee, who is a nice child and a little gen-

tlewoman from the crown of her head to the broken soles of her shoes."

"I didn't mean to write so much of this; I meant to write of something very near my heart and yours —the condition of the colored people.

"Henrietta, I am bewildered. I told you what my nephew said to me the day I came, just a month ago: 'Aunty, be easy on the colored brother, and especially the colored sister.' And I passed it off to you on its humorous side. After my years of interest in the negro, after my patient study of him, it did seem funny to be asked to be gentle with him. Henrietta, dear, it is not so funny as it seemed. When Lucille (she assists in our domestic economy as what we should call in the North a 'second girl') boiled pretty much all the color out of my prettiest kimono because she 'done plum' forgot dey ben cloes in de boiler,' I trust I bore the blow like a real lady.

"When she used my soaps and my cologne I meditated how, without wounding her feelings, I could intimate that they were not there for general distribution. I gave her a bottle of cologne and a cake of soap; it didn't seem to make any difference. The next day I lost one of my rings; it simply slipped off my finger in the malevolent fashion of jewelry; and Lucille found it and came up with it beaming. She did it in such a matter-of-course manner that I positively didn't venture to reward her lest I should unsettle her moral equilibrium; but I gave her ten dollars for her church. They are making a pathetic

struggle to build a church, these poor people who rarely have as much as a dollar over at the end of the year.

"I felt so grateful for the ring that the fact Lucille had swept everything under the bed and simply, in the expressive phrase of the country, 'slicked up' the room, was not, you will agree, an appropriate subject for the moment. But later I led up to the general matter of neatness and thoroughness, and received the heartiest concurrence of Lucille. And for a while she did seem to do better, but in a week the 'litterment' was under the bed again. 'Lucille,' I said 'you know what I told you about never sweeping the dust under the bed.' 'I sho' does, Miss Agathy,' said she cheerfully, 'and I ain't nevah done swept de dus' unner de baid sence.' 'But, Lucille,' said I, 'this morning I looked under the bed, and it was dusty. Look,' I said, and lifted the valance. Did she quail? My dear, she was amazement itself. 'Fo' de Lawd's sake!' she muttered. 'Well, I wudn't allowed dat o' Sister Rutherford. Ain't dat scandillus? I ben so kinder crippled in my wether she offered fo' to do my sweepin', an' dat ar' de way she done it!' Now, with my very own eyes I had seen Lucille enter that room with the broom. I said so. 'Yes'm,' says she; 'I *done* start it fo' a fac'. I only wisht I'd finished it fro', but Sist' Lily Pearl Rutherford done finish.'

" 'Very well,' I said, 'I see I shall have to speak to Lily Pearl.'

" 'I jest begs and pleads wid you, Miss Agathy,

not to; Sist' Lily Pearl nev' forgib me de endurin' world. I hadn't ought to tole you.'

"Then I put the matter by. I didn't speak to Lily Pearl. I didn't need. Matilda had seen that trollop, herself, sweeping that room. She simply told me a lie. Nor is it the first or the tenth.

"What do you think I ought to do about it? One of Lucille's favorite expressions is 'I'se make it de subject of prayer.' Whenever I reprove her she promises amendment in the blithest fashion, and frequently adds, 'I sho' will remember; I'se make it de subjec' of prayer.' Ought one to reprove her for the phrase as making light of sacred things? But, on the other hand, these childlike people take their religion with such simplicity, it does not seem right to deride them. They puzzle me most painfully, Henrietta, I confess."

Not reading over her letter, Agatha continued it, until the second pile of sheets was larger than the first. After some questions regarding friends and Pittsfield matters, the story of Agatha's southern experiences went on:

"Yesterday night I was thinking of you. Giles for the first time was allowed to go to Galen, not to return until the next day. The nurse, as I told you, left Tuesday, with an extra check, much gratitude, a delectable luncheon, a new thermos bottle, a package of Overland Russian tea, which she dotes on, a jar

of marmalade and some cotton on the stalk. She actually was quite human toward the last, and told Giles, with tears in her eyes, that she never expected to have such a model patient again. Considering that Giles was fractious about his baths and nearly worried her into nervous prostration by reciting all the preposterous things with which doctors, according to *him,* were now feasting typhoid patients; and was continually demanding to have his temperature taken and *told;* it shows her good heart or else that he is a very wheedling rascal. *I* think it shows both.

"Well, she departed, and we were rather scared at our freedom at first. But nothing untoward has happened, and Giles does more than he ought and thrives on it; and we breathe freely once more. So, last night, all alone, Matilda up-stairs blissfully buried in the Pittsfield papers and the *Springfield Republican,* I walked on the broad veranda. Ah, but this is a lonely, lonely spot! I have been too engrossed with Giles and the needs of the hour to think of much else; but last night, as I paced around the house walls, looking out over this wide landscape, with its forest wall, and the dull, sonorous, unvarying pulse of the river beating in my ears, I felt that sense of space and isolation and solitude that gripes the heart.

"The few twinkling lights from the low-browed houses amid the fields only deepened the loneliness. They were so few, so puny. On the river bank the big, dark bulk of the mill loomed against the steel

sweep of water round the bend. The gin, with its red walls and slender black stack, lay in the full moonlight and showed its colors faintly; and the big white plantation store shone behind the boughs of the great oak which has stood here since the Spaniards signed away these broad acres under its shade. In the pallid light I could see the river bank across the stream defined by dense woods, which must be wonderfully beautiful in spring. The foliage retained a surprising effect of glow and color when I came; the gum and dogwood and hard maples being almost as sumptuous as our dear Berkshire woods. By now they have dimmed and rusted, but there are green hues still on the privet hedge and the masses of honeysuckle which grows here with incredible luxuriance. The magnolia trees kept the brilliant gloss and the rich color of their leaves. But, of course, the buds are gone. *And they do not raise oranges in this latitude!* They do have snow, also; not much, but a little. But to return to my adventure.

"As I walked, feeling a little oppressed by the loneliness, I looked up to the moon. There was a great, faint, orange halo about it, with tawny brown edges that melted into the ashen gray of ragged clouds in what George Moore would call 'a dim, alluring sky.' Gazing on this moon I did so long to have you at my side, while at the same time I had a feeling that sometime, somewhere, we had looked on such a scene together. It only took me a moment to

disentangle the real from the fanciful; we never saw this landscape together, but such a deep, cobalt blue sky, and such a tawny haloed moon we did see, years ago, in southern France, when we spent the night in the haunted château that Jenny Plunkett rented because she hoped to root up something for the Society of Psychic Research. Which she didn't. Nor did we. We didn't hear anything but creaks, and we never saw a thing; and we stayed awake in our little beds until we lost our tempers. *Now,* do you remember? Well, I remembered, too. And I can't explain such a freak on the part of a normal, well-nourished woman of sixty who has a reasonable religious hope, and does not believe in Christian Science, osteopathy, chiropathy, socialism or ghosts; but I—*I* took a supernatural prowl! It wasn't a very long prowl—only about two miles; and perhaps it was only for the exercise that I went, for I have been housed so much that my muscles fairly ached with laziness. Where did I go? I went to the haunted bayou, to Treasure Slash.

"Hard by a little echoing bridge there is a lonesome pool, an inlet of the river which never runs dry, and sometimes is as deep as a tall tree. On its edges grow hackberry trees, heavy dwarfs with great trunks and low branches and grotesque lumps like tumors on their bark and twisted deformities of limb; grow also tall cypresses which have strangely delicate foliage, finely articulated as ferns, yet so dense it is solemn; and splendid gums with bark of the texture and the

grayish shine of a coat of mail. Beneath there is shed such a continual rain of leafage and twigs that the water shows a dull, yet lustrous reddish black. A growth of some fine vine thatches the trees. It spatters them with red berries that reflect in the water, like flecks of blood. It is the fit scene for the crime it knew once, for there on the sodden edge of the bronzed water they found the body of Ralph Montgomery. That is not the only tragedy which it has witnessed; for there it was the negro conjurer, of whom I told you, had his awful ending; and in that slash, according to tradition, still lie his wicked bones. And the negroes prophesy a dreadful and bloody death to him who shall disturb them. Of course, he haunts the spot, and because of him nobody dares explore for the guerrillas' treasure, which, so they tell, was buried thereabouts.

"Well, this was the object of my quest, this blood-stained, darksome, cypress brake. I slipped one of Giles' revolvers in my jacket pocket, and sallied forth. I walked in the lovely, lovely moonlight under that 'dim alluring sky,' along the still roads until I came to the slash. I assure you, Henrietta, while I had thought some pensive and solemn thoughts on my way of those whom I shall never see this side of eternity, I was not in the least nervous; indeed, to be quite honest, I had put away supernal questioning for the moment, and was planning the menu for dinner next day. I stood on the edge of the swamp and looked; and as I looked I heard a long, low, weary

wail; I can't quite describe it. It rose and sank; then rose and sank again and yet again, three times. You will say a hoot-owl or some beast. Perhaps. I don't know. I said the same thing to myself; and I don't think my heart fluttered, but while I said it, I heard a queer splash in the water—as of a broken bough of a tree falling. And when I looked in the direction of the sound, far down that glimmering black trail through the boughs I saw—Henrietta, I *saw* a *Thing!* The shadow of a man, I *think* a negro man, moving on the face of that ghastly water. And then it came out of the water and lay before me on the road, the same shadow of a man. It was uncanny. But I lifted the revolver and fired; and you never heard such a noise as it made! It might have been a cannon. I shut my eyes when I fired. When I opened them there was nothing—but that wail rose and fell again.

"Did I run? Yes, Henrietta Williams, I ran. And I ran until I got to the familiar long hedge of Giles' place, after which I walked very fast. But I turned round as I ran; I was afraid not to turn round lest the dreadful thing should be coming up behind me. I don't think I thought then that it was anything uncanny; I was rather afraid of a living wicked soul. I am sure also, that I caught a glimpse of a figure scurrying out from the shadow of the trees and running off, obliquely down the road. It was too indistinct; and I was too disturbed to notice was it black or white; I only saw it run; I only noted at

the time that in running it made no footfall, while I went pounding and chugging down the road like an automobile!

"But you will say, how awful if you had hit this creature! No danger. I fired in the air, well over his head. But who could care to play such pranks? Not the colored people or the white renters; they wouldn't dare; and who else is there? Nevertheless, you would better not send the tale to the Society for Psychical Research, *yet!*"

CHAPTER VI

ENTER SIDNEY DANTON

AGATHA was watching an amiable but utterly irresponsible black man scalloping the hedge in the process which he called trimming; and she was trying to devise some aid, such as a board, for his erratic eye. Of a sudden, she became conscious that the artist's attention was fixed elsewhere. Automatically her own gaze followed his, over the lawn, down the drive to the figure just entering the gate. She felt something very like consternation. Perfectly groomed, clad with his usual elegance, and carrying in his hand a neat dress suit case, Sidney Danton was walking up the drive.

"Mercy!" thought Agatha. "What on earth shall I do with him?"

The trivial embarrassments of the daily round, such as, where should he eat? how to receive him? how to lodge him? seemed to slap her in the face. More than once had he sat at her table, with no more embarrassment on her part than on his; but now, she was ashamed that she should feel a craven relief in the reflection that it was Giles' table in question, and not hers. He was coming up the drive past

the turn to the kitchen door; plainly he intended to enter as a guest of the house, not of the domestics. But she waited. It would be Lily Pearl, not Lucille, who would receive him to-day, as Lucille had her weekly afternoon out, Heaven be praised for that! After some moments, Lily Pearl appeared.

"There's a coon down-stairs, Miss Agatha," said she with a sly pucker of mirth in her respectful countenance; "he sent up this cyard," which she proffered.

Agatha's conscience rallied to Sidney Danton's aid; and she said coldly: "That is a distinguished colored gentleman, Lily Pearl. I knew him in Massachusetts. He took high honors in Harvard College. Show him into the library, please." The library, so called, was Giles' business room; a neutral ground.

Lily Pearl said, "Yes'm;" and hesitated. "Miss Agatha," said she, then, in a changed tone, "you think twice, please, ma'am, before you throw 'way your money on that kind of coons. I know about Reverend Merlin and the way he did about the church, and how Mr. Giles made him pay up."

"But you all seemed so pleased with what Mr. Merlin did for you?"

"Well'm, you see he is a powerful orator and pleader, and he gits a heap of money, and maybe he'll give us half; and that'll be jest so much mo'n we'd had! So *we've* got no kick coming. No, ma'am."

"I think those people up North who have denied themselves to give to the churches and the schools

down here; I should think *they* would have a kick coming—" Agatha was not conscious of her lapse into the slang which was the other's native breath.

Lily Pearl smiled her dazzling smile. "But they-all don't know anything 'bout it; and, as the saying is, 'What the mind don't know the heart can't grieve.' "

Agatha had fresh matter for reflection as she went down-stairs. Danton was discovered, at ease in the big leather Morris chair looking at the pictures, his eyes straying over the marks of Harvard about the room, the big crimson banner with Veritas on it, the books of recent poetry by Bynner and Ficke, the sofa cushions, the foot-ball pictures. He sprang up, bowed, and came forward with the charm of manner which was his. Toward her he always showed a kind of caressing gratitude, as if he never lost sight of his eternal obligations, yet so deeply admired and loved the benefactress that such heavy claims on his soul did not gall. The pose was pretty, and of some emotional refinement, verging on sentiment, but Danton's tact never let it become either bizarre or oppressive. Agatha admired his tact, although she was never quite convinced by it. This very instant, when he came forward with a mist as of tears in his eyes, and bowed over her hand, she felt a touch of irritation for which her conscience cudgeled her.

"It is so good to see you again, dear Miss Danforth," said he.

Agatha was dismally aware that she couldn't even respond truthfully that she was glad to see him. She

wasn't. To ask him to eat Giles' salt was out of the question, of course. The tea equipage winked at her through the open door from the little tea carriage in the dining-room, where it always stood ready for travel; but at eleven in the morning, tea doesn't seem indicated; and, for that matter had it been the conventional hour she wasn't sure that she had the right to dispense Giles' tea to one so uncertain of Giles' welcome. She couldn't even give him a cigar; for all the cigars in reach were Giles'; she had brought him a box of his favorites, herself. ("In future," resolved Miss Danforth, "I shall carry tobacco in *every* form.") Would it be wrong, she wondered, to purloin one of the cigars she had given? Meanwhile she was mustering a fictitious cordiality to save the situation; as people do who forget names, but remember faces.

"And how does it come I see you here of all the forgotten places of the earth?" said she.

"I have an old, old grandmother," he replied, "and some kindred down here, all very humble folk, even for my humble race; and my brother heard that my grandmother was very ill and feeble and anxious to see us who are the successful ones of the family in our very different ways. He went down last month; and I made my pilgrimage this. And I could not come without looking you up."

"You would have been very unkind to an old friend if you hadn't"—that is what Agatha would have said two months ago, without thinking; now it

did not seem to suit the occasion; it was too intimate. She found his manner, which had seemed so perfect to her and to all her friends, a thought too assured; she only said, "Thank you."

She was aware that her tone was almost chill; yet she was unable to warm it. He went on to tell her that he hoped to find much information for her regarding his race in "this primitive place."

"Well, you find that they are not peons or wronged in any way by the planters, don't you?" said she.

"I sincerely hope not," he responded; "I see that they have a church here, and I hope to meet them all. Isn't it the same church for which you gave Merlin some money, if I may be so inquisitive?"

Agatha said that it was; she supplemented the information with, "And he kept most of it himself."

Danton shrugged his shoulders, a trick that she had never liked. "I'm investigating the Reverend Harry a little myself," said he. "I'm afraid that he is a fraud of the first water, but I can tell better next week, if I can tarry here that long. Do you happen to know of a decent colored family where I could get board and they would admit me and my tin bath-tub? And do you know where I could get a horse and buggy? I want to drive to the church with some hymn books I have for them."

She was so relieved by the ending of his speech that she was sure they could supply him with a horse and runabout. About the other matter she suggested consulting their cook. "She may know of

some place," said she. "I'll ask her. We all of us in any difficulty go to Lily Pearl."

"She looks capable," returned Danton indifferently.

Lily Pearl consulted (Agatha fervently prayed Giles would not return in the interval) was a haven of refuge.

She abode with her grandmother in a very comfortable cabin, not far away; nothing would be easier than for her to cook luncheon for him; and he might stay a few days if necessary.

"You understand," protested Miss Agatha at the imperious bidding of her conscience, "if it were my *own* house I should have him here," to which Lily Pearl answered soothingly, "I understand, Miss Agatha, honey, I understand perfectly. I suppose you-all won't miss a little slice off the steak; I'll cut it off and cook it and put a Bearnaise sauce on it, and fry him some suffléd potatoes, and you give me one tomato and a little lettuce, and I'll make a salad and toss him up a sweet omelette on it—oh, he'll get a good meal, better'n he's had for one while."

Therefore relieved, Agatha returned to find her worst anticipations realized. Giles stood in the doorway. Well, he behaved with unexpected humanity. He was talking quite amicably of Harvard with just the manner that he would have used at other times; and he gave Danton a cigar himself. He was very nice about a horse, also proffering a man and buggy.

"I had a letter from Mr. Merlin about the church only yesterday," said Danton. "Of course, you know Merlin?"

"Enough to advise you to keep shy of him," replied Giles dryly.

"Ah? May I confide to you that part of my business is to get to the bottom of Merlin's business methods?"

"He's an engaging scoundrel," said Giles; "but I'm sure he is a scoundrel."

"Let us put that much to his credit, then—" Danton's retort was in perfect good nature, but Agatha was sure that he winced— "there are so many scoundrels who are not engaging."

"All the same he ought to be in the pen. Some day I'll have to send him there."

Danton looked rather queerly at Giles. It seemed to Agatha that he was thinking, "How easily these white men think they can torture, ruin, kill us, and how little our misery is to them." Giles *was* flippant. She supposed it was due to his western education. Anything that offended her in her nephew from his cravats to his ethical opinions, always went to the credit of the West. "The West is so flippant," she sighed to herself, now, while aloud she announced the approach of Tobias and the buggy.

Of course Danton made his adieux at once; but before he went he said: "May I see you, again, Miss Danforth? I'm very anxious to talk over some things." And there was nothing left for her to

do but to assent with as much cordiality as she could muster.

After he was gone she went up-stairs. She took a number of bank-notes and put them into a package, scribbled a few kindly words to accompany them, and gave the package to Lily Pearl for safe delivery to Danton.

That evening she began a letter to Henrietta. The theme always in her thoughts had to have its word. She wrote:

"Sidney Danton is here visiting his grandmother. I didn't know he had such a thing; and I have known him for three years. He seemed to me just a detached personality, say the soul of his race. Henrietta, what a tragedy is the life of these people whom we have wronged in so multitudinous ways! Is it this man's fault or *our* forefathers' that he must suffer so? It is like a weight on my heart, the spectacle of them all, so kindly, so simple-hearted, giving so generously of their little, and because of us, having so little to give.

"And there is Lily Pearl! I have shunned the subject of Lily Pearl except casually; but, my dear, she is an Awful Problem! I would not have supposed that I could endure to accept in Giles' house a colored woman of the most abandoned character and the most attractive personality. But—you never saw Lily Pearl! For one thing, to have a negro servant who is clean not because she has been

taught to be so, but out of sheer physical love of cleanliness, who keeps herself, her kitchen, her utensils, and all the food which she cooks just as dainty, clean and sanitary as I would keep them myself, or *more,* as I would want some one else to keep them for me (which, you know, is a step in advance!), is a great thing; then in addition to have some one who is always gay, always good-humored and delightfully interested in all one's suggestions and concerns, who always frankly admires one—I suppose it is flattery, but it is so beautifully and kindly done it has none of the rank offensiveness of stupid flattery—and to crown all, who is the very best and most ingenious and entrancing cook in the world—Henrietta, do you wonder that I can not protest? Besides, she is honest. She speaks the truth. She does not even steal things to eat, which they tell me negroes will steal who would not steal anything else—take Lucille, for instance.

"Mrs. Caldwell tells me that Lily Pearl's grandfather on her mother's side was a white gentleman of fine old family and great personal honor, a distinguished lawyer who lost the opportunity, or rather would not even consider the opportunity to make a great fortune in a questionable way; a very great man, General Montgomery called him; but he was a man of loose life and an atheist. His life he reformed, married and became a prominent figure in Congress; I don't know about his opinions. There are times when I fancy Lily Pearl has inher-

ited more things than her aquiline nose from the old rake.

"Anyhow, Giles says she has that intangible thing called honor. She might, I fear, have honor without honesty, and have honesty without honor. As I take it there is an element of magnanimity about honor, a certain largeness of view. Old Deacon Weems, now, walked a mile to return a railway ticket that the conductor forgot to take up; yet he let the wife of the man who gave him his first start in life go to the poor-house. But Lily Pearl has honesty and honor both. And oh, my dear, my dear, she is so *sunny!* Don't you think it is a pure delight to see anybody who is genuinely light-hearted? I love to hear Lily Pearl's rich, untrained, rippling voice as she sings while she concocts the most marvelous things with eggs and cream! And, anyhow, whatever she was, she is living a perfectly decent life now.

"There is another thing which I might urge as my excuse for laxity. Lily Pearl's paternal grandfather was the negro, Steven Rutherford, who helped Roger Gardiner to escape during the war. But I don't urge this, for I know in my heart of hearts that it is Lily Pearl's own personal pleasantness that holds me in bondage.

"The claim Steven Rutherford's granddaughter has on me, however, you may be sure I shall not try to escape.

"There is still another and a potent reason why we should keep Lily Pearl; how much should we bet-

ter matters were we to change? Lucy May, the former incumbent, was, in Lucille's phrase, 'leading a gay life,' and Tobias, her husband, tried to cut her throat, which (one can't blame her) she said she wouldn't take from any man; and *she* fled. The only other cook of any pretensions out of Memphis is a brown charmer named Susy Searle, who is suspected to have poisoned her husband.

"Talking of husbands, Tobias, the husband of Lucy, filled me with dismay until I saw him. Matilda wanted to go directly back to Massachusetts, and the way she used to lock, or, rather, to barricade (for the key was gone) the adjoining rooms which we occupy, would amuse you. That was at first only, before she knew Tobias. She told me that her only hope was that Tobias had fled after his wife; and that the nice, mild, meek little man who waited on the table would stay. He was just the nicest, kindest colored man she ever saw; his name was Reuben, she thought.

"He was a quiet, soft-spoken, sad-eyed creature, very quick about his work, and very willing; I liked him, too. But one day I said, 'Reuben—your name *is* Reuben, isn't it?'

" 'No, ma'am,' said he; 'it's Tobias. My full name is Tobias Aaron Montgomery.'

" 'But why did you answer to Reuben?'

" 'I 'lowed maybe you-all *wanted* me to be called Reuben. You-all maybe liked de name bettah!'

"*He* was Tobias. Well, he stayed. Once I asked

Giles, would this gentle, timid being really have slashed his wife with his razor?

"'I reckon,' said Giles; 'the mildest beggar going, too, but get a nigger worked up and he's as reckless of consequences as a child!'

"Poor children! After I have tried to reconcile these things I see with what I have always believed I can only end with that—Poor children! Are they or our forefathers to blame for their heritage?"

CHAPTER VII

THE GUARD OF THE TREASURE

A WEEK later Agatha stood on the veranda watching Matilda pick violets. A jacqueminot rose tree nodded above the girl's brown head, swinging two gorgeous, flaming roses. There was a spring verdure in the patches of grass greening on the lawn under the slant sun-rays, a spring softness in the air and a spring depth in the tender azure sky with its drifted and massed white clouds. "Yet next week is Christmas," mused Miss Danforth, "and, to-day, we go on a treasure hunt to the slash; and instead of coming back to a civilized luncheon at home we are going to drive three miles off into the woods to 'a lovely place' Lee has found where Tobe is going to barbecue a little pig!"

The hunt was Giles' proposal; he suggested that as the old general and Mrs. Phil were off to the little river town, where they sold their cotton, that here was a chance to hunt for buried treasure. "I didn't like to propose it to the old boy," explained Giles; "associations, you know; they found his son there; but ever since you told me about your spook, Aunty, I've been on edge to rummage that old swamp!"

"But Lee, will she not be made sad by the same thing?"

Giles' brow knitted; "Lee is—different," he returned soberly. "Lee wants the money so awfully, you see, that she won't let herself consider anything else. I can't quite make Lee out. Mrs. Caldwell is there, did you know? Came this morning to keep Lee company, and *she* is keen for the thing. Then after we get tired hunting, we can drive to our little picnic place where Lily Pearl and Tobe will have everything ready. We'll take along your tea-basket, and coffee in the thermos bottles and some fizz, and have a grand picnic in December. Not? Write that to Pittsfield!"

"I suppose Lily Pearl and Tobias will go straight to the picnic grounds," suggested Agatha, rather won by the prospect of a December picnic, "the colored people are so in terror of the slash."

Giles grinned: "Not Lily Pearl," said he; "that amazing dark heroine doesn't give a cent for ha'nts, if you please; begged me to let her help, she wants to see the fun of hunting for the treasure, but Tobe's scared all right."

Then and there the excursion was arranged. Mrs. Caldwell was to drive Miss Danforth in Giles' buggy, Giles and Lee were to ride and Tobias and Lily Pearl had the resplendent new farm wagon for themselves and the camp kitchen.

Agatha found herself wondering if there could be a treasure, by the time they were on the road. The

two young people cantered ahead and Tobias reluctantly guided his mules behind; for Lily Pearl's begging had been successful and the wagon was to go to the slash and stay a little while before going on to the picnic ground.

Matilda had been offered the outing; but Matilda was timid. She said she was "behind in her mending," and clung to the house. Lucille would give her her luncheon and supervise the weekly rug beating done by Ned, the coachman and gardener, who took Tobias' place for the day, with the amiable adaptability of the African. Both Lucille and Ned kept their own opinion of the foolhardiness of "Sister Rutherford and Tobe" in going to a notoriously accursed spot; and they showed no disappointment that they were elected to stay at home.

"Praise God fo' dat!" responded Lucille piously, when Miss Danforth allotted her work for the day.

She carried good nature so far as to offer to "tote li'le Antoinette up bid you all good-by, seein' you gwine run big resk, fo' sho'!" Lily Pearl only laughed. "Don't you let on to my gran' that I'm going anywhere on earth, you fool nigger," said she lightly; "and you see Ned don't chatter neither, or first thing you know I won't have any of that pie Miss Agatha said I could give you-all, left. That sure certain! You heah me?"

Lucille heard. She promised glibly, "But what is I gwine say to you' gran' if she come up heah an' you ain't by?" she urged, with a trace of wounded

feeling and dignity, "I ain't use t' lyin' an' hit come hard."

"*Must,*" replied Lily Pearl dryly, "but I ain't asking any lies of you-all. Just tell her I've gone on a picnic with the white folks and Tobe. You ain't got no call to *say* where or to *know* where."

"I mistrus' Tobe won't go wid you-all; he says he sho' hates to monkey roun' dat ar slash. De—you knows who—*he ben seen lately,* dey does say!"

And Lily Pearl laughed again, a laugh which Lucille told a number of her cronies, afterward "fai'ly made de blood freeze in de hairt."

"I reckon I can make out to toll Tobe along," said she.

"Dat 'ooman 'low dar ain't nuffin she kain't do wid a man person!" moaned Lucille; while sorrowfully she shook her head as the steel wagon rolled down the drive, its inviting load snugly swathed in the rainy weather rugs, and Lily Pearl alongside the grinning Tobias on the spring seat.

"Trubbel come a-runnin', you see, 'fo' dis sun down," pronounced the dusky Cassandra.

"Well, I hopes it doan' hit Sist' Rutherford," said Ned, "she's a lady, she is."

"It hit her fust an' fo'mos'," retorted Cassandra with some irritation, "I gwine tell Cora how you talk 'bout Sist' Rutherford, hit am scandilous."

"Well, fo' de Lord's sake! I didn't done nary talkin'. I skacely done paht lips wid Sist' Rutherford; nor I doesn't aimter. An' I sets de worl' by Cora;

an' Sist' Rutherford done l'arn 'er to make light braid. Dat ar's de main reason I ben so grateful to 'er. Lucille, you doan' say nuffin' to Cora or I tell Harris 'bout how you—" He had no need of further threatening, for Lucille protested that she "jes' ben funnin';" and turned the subject to the darksome tales of the swamp.

Unconscious Lily Pearl drove blithely to the haunted spot, where she bounded nimbly to earth and brought Giles the iron rods prepared for the search. "Tobe, he'll hold the horses," she explained; "he wouldn't no more step alongside that slash than he'd jump into a burning fiah, no, ma'am. But I don't be superstitious. No, ma'am, I don't b'lieve in nothing."

"There is at least one colored person who isn't superstitious," commented Agatha to Mrs. Caldwell as they strolled apart.

"They inherit superstition, I reckon," said the little Memling lady thoughtfully, "but Lily Pearl's African superstition has had a white antidote; the old judge, her grandfather, was famed for his hardy skepticism. When he was a boy and they were initiating him into a secret society, they put him into a coffin and left him tied by his feet but not his hands; and watched for him to scramble out half scared to death—I reckon he had been bragging how little he was afraid of ghosts. They left him in the graveyard just where it was said a ghost walked. He was so still they got scared themselves; and half an hour

after looked in on him. My dear Miss Danforth, he was sound asleep! No shamming, he really was; he apologized to the boys, saying: 'You fellows had run me so hard I was dead beat and couldn't help it.' And the haunted houses they used to have him look up! Oh, Lily Pearl has a good title to her fearlessness."

"Inheritance is a fearful problem," said the New England woman. But the Southerner was not inclined to problems; she said that they made her nervous. "And I'm a wee bit nervous already," she confessed. "Of course, I don't believe in spooks, but I'm deadly afraid of them; and I never did believe there was any treasure hidden anyhow. But—look at your nephew! If he isn't wading right into that slash."

"That's why he wore such high boots," explained Agatha coolly, "Lee is wiser though; she has the boat." Lee was in the boat moored by the loggers half a mile away, which she had piloted through the tortuous channel unobserved by Giles, using her oar as a paddle and a searching rod at the same time. Lily Pearl had caught the infection and was stabbing the water with a steel rod. She made a picturesque and charming figure as she stood, silhouetted against the blue sky on the ridge of new sod. Her profile was as regular as a Roman's, with something of the Roman boldness of outline. Her lips were hardly fuller than the lips of the famous bust of Julia. Her slender, unfettered shape, in its backward pose as

she lifted her rod, was instinct with splendid grace and life.

"Upon my word," whispered Mrs. Caldwell, "it isn't so hard to understand something of Lily Pearl's fascination; doesn't she in that light blue gown with her white turban and that scarlet ribbon round her throat, look like a wild princess? It's well your nephew isn't an artist."

"I don't think my nephew is in any danger," said Agatha, rather stiffly.

"Not in this generation," agreed Mrs. Caldwell gravely, "but fifty or sixty years ago, before the war; then they didn't have that horror of it. There is one big advantage of the war which every thoughtful Southerner realizes."

Agatha recoiled a little. "We have a ghastly lot to answer for," said she. "To sum up our sins against the Indian and our sins against the negro—when I think of it all I am frightened."

"I don't know about the Indian, I'll grant our sin against him," said Mrs. Caldwell. "But as regards the niggro—honestly, with all its badness, slavery educated the niggro better and quicker than anything else could. Look how sunk in superstition and brutal despotism some of the African tribes are! Look at Hayti! Do you know what voodooism is? Do you know what they do to those babies?"

"I suppose—what has Lee caught?"

Forgetting everything else, the ladies ran toward Lee and Giles. She had called the latter to her as-

sistance; and between them, tugging and straining they lifted something barely above the water and recoiling instinctively and simultaneously let it fall back! But there had been an instant's revelation of its hideous outline. It was the almost consumed skeleton of a man, black or white it was hard telling, but there were tufts of gray wool on the glistening skull, and in a mass of leaves and slime dreadfully covering the bones there showed some sodden rags which still kept streaks of red. A sick spasm of disgust and loathing shook Agatha; something beyond the physical recoil of the sight. But she set the Danforth mouth firmly and she held out the stout cane which she had brought with her, to Giles.

"You can get a better grip with that," she said in an even voice.

"Hand the cane up to *me,* please, ma'am," called a voice. Lily Pearl with the agility of a wild thing was crawling along the great overhanging limb of a hackberry tree. She poised herself just above the heads of the fishers. The limb swayed and sagged under her weight. "I can reach 'im with the cane, Miss Danforth," cried Lily Pearl, and her melodious tone did not change a note, "if only this pesky limb will hole me!"

"It won't, but it will hold *me!*" cried Lee, "scramble off, Lily Pearl, and give the cane to Mr. Giles. You help him; I'll take the coil of rope and get on there and lasso the old conjure-man, when you fetch him up."

All this while Giles, who had secured a fresh clutch of the thing under water, was roaring imprecations, threats and commands at the unhappy Tobias. Tobias never stirred in his tracks; nothing moved about him save his chattering jaw and two wildly rolling eyeballs. Otherwise he was petrified by terror.

"Leave alone callin' on him, Mist' Giles, please, sir," cried the undaunted Lily Pearl, "that nigger's fixing to run. Cry on him to stop or we'll sure lose 'im! Miss Lee and I can fetch old man Bleeze *easy* for you!"

"Lily Pearl," called Giles, "you're out of sight! So are you, Lee. Tobias, you brave man, stay where you are. Now, Aunty, hand over that cane."

Lee's rope whirled as Giles made a mighty heave, nearly upsetting the boat; and the dreadful catch upreared its dirty white poll above the water. "Ole man Bleeze, sure 'nuff," said Lily Pearl who was now in the boat. "'Twas the prophecy that he nevah *should* have a sepulchre and whoeveh touch his bones must die with his boots on! Haul hard, Mr. Danforth, I don't b'lieve in those fool ha'nts!"

"Neither do I," said Agatha, "let me help you."

"Well, I don't believe in ha'nts, but I'm right scared of them," Mrs Caldwell observed with a shudder; "but I'm not going to stand by and watch you all defy the devil and not lift a hand. Let *me* get hold of the creature!" Among them, Tobias

watching the proceedings with sighs and strong groanings, they moored the boat and pulled to shore the skeleton which it bore in tow. No more than a skeleton, now, sodden red rags and tatters clinging to the bones which the blue-gray mud of the swamp streaked hideously. But they pulled the thing up the bank. They had brought a spade to excavate the pit for their fire; this Giles took on his shoulder. "I'm going to finish this job," said he; "you have Tobias get a lot of trash together and I'll dig a pit and make a fire and put this skeleton in it. A good cremation is what he needed on earth and he'll get it *now*. No funeral bells for *him!*"

"But the coroner?" said Agatha, "oughtn't there be an inquest?"

"Inquest on the mound builders!" scoffed Giles, "why, the fellow was killed before the war—or just after. No, we'll burn him good and plenty. Lee, honey, you take this note I'll write to Sidney Danton and get him a horse to ride back on. He's the only soul on this plantation has the nerve to help me with this job." He wrote the note which Lee took without a word and galloped off while Giles repaired to the brow of the hill. Lily Pearl stood looking with a curious expression at the poor clay which had been so full of schemes and dark passions.

Agatha returned to Tobias who indeed stood in need of comfort. His skin had bleached to a strange mottled coffee color, of nature he was black as a

stovepipe; his hands shook like willow leaves in a gale.

Agatha's matter of fact talk steadied him a little. Presently, looking up from him, she was aware that Mrs. Caldwell was intently watching something, through the field-glass. They had brought it with them, hoping to have a chance to study the few winter denizens among the birds, both being enthusiasts in bird lore.

"Do you see a vireo?" called Agatha.

"No, ma'am, I reckon not," Mrs. Caldwell replied softly.

"Whar Sist' Rutherford *at,* please, ma'am?" said Tobias timidly.

Then, it came to Agatha with a little shock that Mrs. Caldwell had taken the spy-glass the better to observe her nephew and that quadroon woman. A feeling which she did not know she could feel, swept over her like the breath of a flame; she was so angry that she did not trust herself to speak. At which of the three concerned she felt the most bitterness it were hard to say. It was not possible, she told herself. That nigger—she checked herself shocked at her own language of unreason—and became conscious that Mrs. Caldwell was beckoning. Mechanically she went over to the Southerner's side. Under the pretext of pointing out a red bird, Mrs. Caldwell whispered: "I think *something* has happened. I was trying to see a cat-bird and I saw Lily Pearl go over that way toward Mr. Danforth. She

stopped him and what she said to him seemed to interest him; and then with the glass I could see that she was handing him something and they were both examining it. Can there really be a treasure, do you reckon?"

"Wasn't that in a big box?" Agatha's head began to swim; she blushed at the thought of her own suspicions, so cruel and so preposterous.

"A big iron box," repeated the southern lady dejectedly. "Yes, but"—hope reviving—"couldn't it maybe have been rusted and broken by the water? Think of all the years it was in it! And maybe something floated loose and Lily Pearl saw it—"

"Wouldn't she keep it herself? Nobody saw her pick it up."

"Lily Pearl! No, ma'am."

"Hush!" warned Agatha, "they're coming; and something *has* happened; but I can't decide if good or bad."

Giles came forward, smiling; but his first word was not for them; he had torn a page out of his notebook and he was writing on it as he called to Tobias: "Tobias, I want you to carry this note to Miss Lee, she'll be coming back with Danton. Go a flying!"

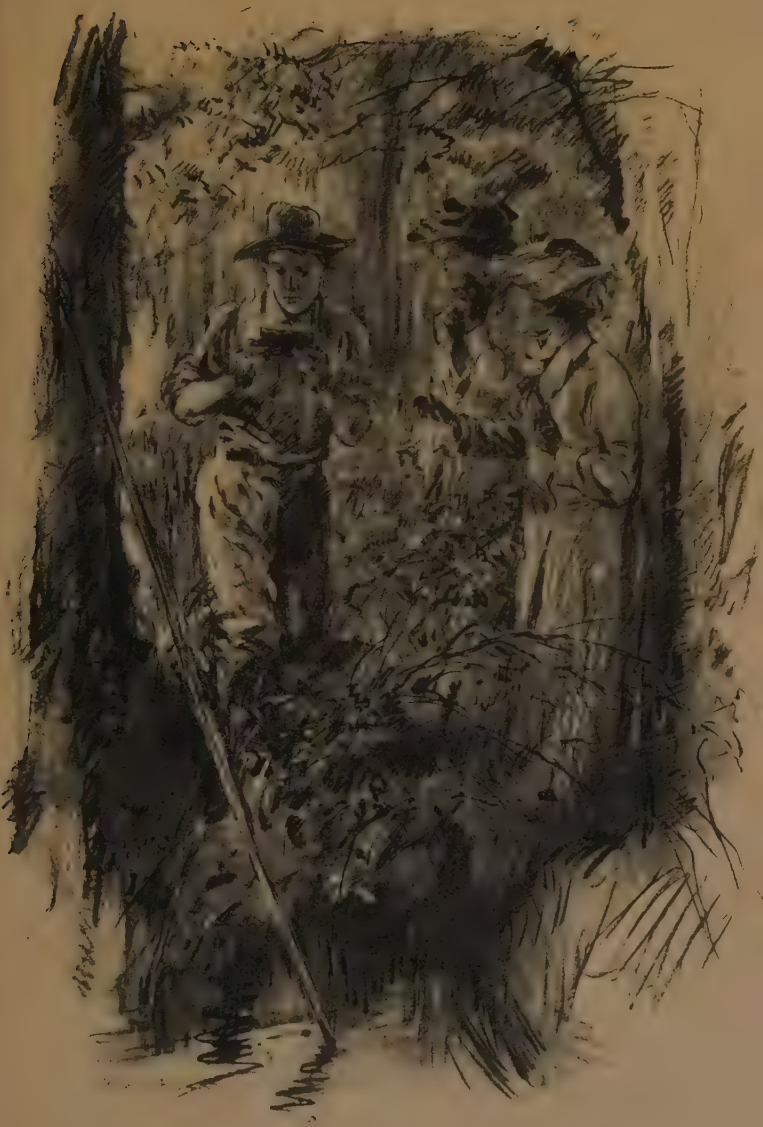
Tobias' alacrity was unfeigned. He was almost out of sight before Giles obtained permission to smoke, and lighted a cigarette.

"Ladies," said Giles, "a rum thing has happened. I thought Lee better not know just yet, and I wanted Tobe out of the way, too, for the less said about this

last development the better. We went out treasure hunting and we found a corpse; but the old party was more useful than one would suppose. After I went off Lily Pearl saw something on the edge of the slash. Either it had entangled itself in the old voodoo man's anatomy or more likely he raked it out of the slash as we pulled him along. Here it is." He held out to them a narrow, flat, tin despatch-box, once japanned black, but now rusted out of any semblance of color.

"My God!" breathed Mrs. Caldwell.

"Yes, you recognize it, don't you?" said Giles. "It is Ralph Montgomery's box that you saw that night. Look. The lock was rusted so it broke." He lifted the lid and very gingerly removed a large pocket-book such as is used for bank-notes. The leather was discolored and blistered. Drawing nearer, and with a quick glance about him, he opened the book. One side was filled with bank-notes, but how many or of what denominations it was impossible to guess, so matted together were they and sodden with the slime which had seeped through to them during years. "I shall advise the general to send them, just as they are, to the treasury department," said Giles. "I don't dare touch them, but, here, this is less affected by water." He drew from the other side a bag of some kind of skin and from it very carefully he lifted partway a necklace. The damp had blackened the setting of the stones; but seemingly the stones themselves had been but little dimmed by their strange



bath. They still glowed and shone, the famous Karolyi opals set with rubies and diamonds.

"Oh! that honest creature!" cried Mrs. Caldwell.

"You said rightly," murmured Agatha, "trusted with diamonds and rubies—indeed she could be!"

"She's a peach!" was Giles' tribute. "But do you all realize that she has recovered something besides the Karolyi necklace and the rings for the Montgomerys? She does. The first thing she said was: 'Now, I reckon they all won't be talking any more how Mr. Ralph gambled away his wife's jewelry!' "

"But how did they get in the slash? He was five feet away when they found him." Mrs. Caldwell spoke in a voice of awe; she thought remorsefully of those years in which she had mourned her cousin's guilt more than his death.

"That's a mystery we may or may not find out. It looks as if some one who knew that he was carrying those jewels followed him and shot him, shot him twice; once from a distance, making the wound that had no powder stain; the other close to him. Now —it's only my own guess; take it for what it's worth —when he fell, he was not in the buggy, he was out of it for some reason; my notion is that this fellow inveigled him out on some pretext. Anyhow, he must have got out; and as he was standing he was shot. What would you have done in such a situation? I reckon, Aunt Agatha, you'd have done just as he did. He had the financial salvation of the family in his pocket, and he did the only thing pos-

sible to save it; he threw the pocket-book into the swamp before the assassin could fire that second shot. He knew they were planning to explore that very swamp; he didn't count on the effect his death would have."

"But why didn't the murderer hunt the swamp for the pocket-book?" said Miss Danforth.

"There is only one reason occurs to me; but that seems a good enough one."

"And that is—"

"Because he was a nigger!"

"I see," said Mrs. Caldwell, "but do you suspect anybody?"

"Nobody I know here seems capable of such a thing; but the murder is eight or nine years off. Somebody who was here at the time may have been bad enough. We have to look up whoever has been on the plantation who might have been capable of such a thing. And if there was a regular black bad one—well, he will have to prove an alibi before he is clear to my mind. Alibi has to embrace Memphis."

"But why do you think the not going into the swamp would prove he was a colored man?" said Agatha.

"Did you notice Tobias' antics? Well, any other darky I know would have thrown the same kind of fit. You can't gage a negro's superstition by the poor little weakling we call that name. It's one of the things you have to reckon with always; and

a mighty tough proposition. They are all of them deadly afraid of that swamp. Come a little nearer, I don't want even that black Pearl to hear this. For quite a little while I have had a suspicion *somebody* was prowling round that slash. I found marks of a pick-ax on some logs and the dent of a hoof, on the bank, and the merest suggestion of a foot-print in the mud, almost effaced by the mule's hoofs, but not quite. Besides"—he shot a flicker of his bright eyes at his aunt—"the ha'nt is reported out again. Only last week, *two* ha'nts were seen; a tall brown, hooded shape with a white face and gleaming eyes; and a black shadow that wavered in the water and then ran noiselessly down the road—"

"*Giles!* How awful!"—Mrs. Caldwell shuddered as she clung to Agatha. "Wasn't it?" said Giles, "Well, I think the brown ha'nt was a perfect lady; but the dark man who ran away in his bare feet"—his smiling mouth hardened—"the dark one was the man who murdered Ralph Montgomery."

CHAPTER VIII

THE TAINT OF HIS RACE

THERE was a little delay in finding Danton, and Tobias the footman came back before either of the riders. That Tobias returned at all to his master and his mules should be marked up to the credit of his black conscience, for he was in a state of mortal terror, so that his wobbling legs barely scrambled him into his wagon. Then Lee appeared, followed after a little space by Danton. Agatha noted the space, and also that it must have been by Danton's intention as well as Lee's; since he was riding Blue Bess, Giles' fast Kentucky mare. And under all the other emotions of the moment she was aware that not only did she grimly approve Danton's humility, she would have resented anything else. "Prejudice is the fastest and meanest working germ there is," quoth Agatha to herself; and sadly she watched Blue Bess approach. A winsome creature was Bess; her dun coat beautifully mottled with black and shining like satin, and her Kentucky ancestry plain in her lustrous eye, her high withers, her clean, splendid lines of flank, her slender legs and her perfect action.

And her rider was as handsome as she. In his gay negligée shirt, his crimson cravat flying, his white cap and belt making high lights and his black leggings shining, his sultry beauty would have caught any eye. Lily Pearl lifted herself from her kettle to look at him, her teeth shining. "My word! don't he ride funny!" She giggled, "Mist' Giles used to ride that-a-way, too, when he first came, but he learned better mighty briefly."

But Tobias' responsive snigger was withered by a glance and the instant addition: "Reckon that's how they all learn them at Harvard College, that great universal city. Reckon he's paid a heap of money to learn to ride that-a-way."

Never suspecting criticism, but quite aware of his dark spectators, Danton rose and fell in his saddle and held his elbows at the approved English angle and bent forward at the waist, as he had been taught, sure of his horsemanship. And, indeed, he did have a pretty hand with a horse's mouth; and knew every mood of his mount. Leaning from his saddle as Lee stopped, he called to Tobias and hastened to help her alight. But Giles was before him and Lee herself before Giles, already on the ground. Tobias who had clambered down from his wagon and run to take Lee's horse, glued his arms to his side when Danton turned to him. "You kin hitch onywhar roun' yere," he said sulkily, "yon's a good tree."

Danton, after bowing to the company and removing his cap, respectfully yet with an air quite differ-

ent to Tobias' mien, tied Blue Bess to a swinging cypress limb; and asked Giles what he could do. As he followed Giles, he paused long enough in front of Lily Pearl to say: "I'm heartily glad, Mrs. Rutherford, to find that you don't join in these degrading superstitions."

"No, sir, I don't believe in nothing," laughed Lily Pearl, eyes and teeth shining in her leisurely smile.

Danton smiled also, though more soberly. He picked his way across the muddy ooze to the hillside where Giles awaited him with spade and ax.

At the white man's feet, he, to use a great writer's phrase, "as safe in his white skin as a coat of mail," lay the repulsive leavings of the conjurer's soul; a sight to sicken any unprepared spectator, but hardly to affect him as it affected Danton. His dark skin grew ashen gray and seemed to wither; his hands clenched; it was with difficulty that he restrained a convulsive shudder. "I didn't expect him to look like *that!*" he muttered. Even as he spoke a gleam of sunshine and the waving of a branch sent a strange effect of twitching muscles into the dreadful face.

"By Jove, the old wretch is grinning at us," jeered Giles in the brutal sportiveness of youth with terror. Sidney ground his teeth on a groan. And Giles, who had not looked up at him before, being busy with his plans, gave him a keen glance. "I sent for you, Mr. Danton," said he, "because I knew you were the only man here who wouldn't throw a fit at

the idea of handling this stuff and defying the prophecy."

"Never having heard of the prophecy, it can't scare me very much," remarked Danton. He compelled a careless tone; and walking firmly up to the body, he examined it with a steady glance. Giles stepped to his side. "A mighty wicked old man," said Giles. "I wouldn't have believed, yesterday, that I could ever want to kick a *dead* man; but I have a nasty hankering to kick that carrion, remembering the wickedness he did. It's a reflex action, the horror over his crimes, I dare say, this queer notion that anybody who dares touch his loathsome old bones will die a sudden and bloody death. I guess I'll risk it."

"There is no risk for *you;* a black man's curses can't hurt a white man; if they could," cried Danton bitterly, "your land would have been as desolate as Sodom and the bones of your people would have been bleaching long ago."

"I reckon some of your people *have* felt pretty ugly," Giles said placidly, "but where's the use of hot air? You all didn't come from a garden of Eden; and if your voodoo practices are a sample of your style over there, you were lucky to get free passage out, even if you didn't come first class. But this fellow, he was the *limit!* Come, I'll give you an instance; most voodoo work is what the reporters call 'unprintable,' but here's just a little common or garden bit of cruelty. One poor, honest fellow in

this Black River bottom dared to defy that old devil. He had a pet horse. The horse died in agony, having been fed ground glass. Then, they found a ball of devil's yarn in the well and the wife and little child of the man who dared to have a soul of his own, began to sicken; and the conjure-man sent him word there was just one way to save them, pay him what he asked. He asked a sum of money that meant ruin to the poor devil—*and his right hand.*"

"What do you mean?"

"He needed the man's hand in his hellish business. *And he got it!* Come on, you take the ax and I'll take the spade and I'll roll this dead dog into that pit and burn every atom of his accursed bones. I'll risk it."

"You run no risk," Danton repeated.

"Do you think *you* run any?"

"I'll take it, if I do," said the other. He caught the ax from Giles' hand. At one blow he struck off the grinning head; with another he dismembered the trunk. "This is the easiest way," the words came between his clenched teeth—"and he deserves no better, we'll shovel the damn stuff into the pit!"

"Jove! but you are thorough, Danton, and not a bit squeamish," admired Giles, though he turned a bit sick. "Are you sure the ladies can't see? It isn't a pretty sight. They haven't gone yet."

"They can stand seeing what we can stand doing," snarled Danton, smiting with feverish energy. Not another word passed. Giles conquered his nausea,

which was not all physical, and piled up wood in the pit; Danton worked like a madman. When they drew back, both of them, the fire which Giles had kindled was blazing savagely under and over the conjurer's bones. Danton struck his smeared ax into the ground, cleansing it thus and on the dank leaves thick about their feet and leaned it against the tree. He gazed strangely at his hands; then, sinking down on a log, he covered his face with them.

He was trembling violently and the tears ran down his cheeks.

Puzzled, a bit disgusted, and withal touched, Giles clumsily essayed comfort; he muttered that those stories were all tommyrot; that he'd slept in a haunted house; that he'd often walked around this swamp; that there wasn't the least bit of danger—

"Oh, danger!" sobbed Danton, "damn danger! How'd you like to belong to that fiend's race and have it rubbed into you all of a sudden? How'd you like to *understand* his kind? I never believed I was a nigger. Now I know how it feels. I never did before. And you talk of danger!"

"I won't," cried Giles, "by jove, I'm a brute! I haven't my whisky flask; but we've some fizz in the wagon; you sit tight and I'll sprint across—"

"Oh, I'm not afraid," said Danton, "and I don't care for wine—"

"Let me get some hot coffee then from Lily Pearl—"

"I couldn't. Not here. But if there isn't any more I can do—"

"No, we can both go. All right now?"

Danton said that he was quite ready to go; but Giles lingered five minutes longer, feeding the fire with dry leaves and talking cheerfully of the prosperity of Arkansas negroes. On departing he said in a casual way, his hand sliding into his pocket, "I've been taking up a lot of your time—"

"All my time is at the disposal of your aunt's nephew," said Danton quietly; "I was very glad indeed to come."

Giles pulled out his handkerchief and wiped a perfectly dry brow. "All I can say is I'm awfully obliged, Danton." He took out his cigar case and proffered it. After an imperceptible hesitation, Danton accepted a cigar with a murmur of thanks, but he did not light it, as he followed Giles back to the wagon.

Meanwhile Tobias had helped Lily Pearl pack the few things, which had been taken out of the wagon, with a face of deepest gloom. Had the iron rods used to prod the swamp been white hot he could hardly have handled them more charily. At intervals he sighed heavily.

"What ails you, Tobe?" said Lily Pearl finally, "anything mo' than bein' scared up? Are you repining because they gave up the picnic and I'm going to cook that pig to home stiddier yon in the woods?"

"I got suthin' on my min'!"

"Well, get it off on mine; tell *me!*"

Tobe sent his darkling glance over the landscape; his voice dwindled to a whisper; "Say, Sist' Rutherford, did it ben a ha'nt, you reckon, dat look lak a cullud man an' ben hidin' in de brake, jes now?"

"I didn't see nobody." Lily Pearl frowned.

"But I did when I run wid de message; off by de road ahint dat big log."

"Shucks! He was just resting."

"I tells you he ben a crouchin'."

Lily Pearl's head turned languidly far enough to find the log indicated, which was in a direct line of vision with the little clump of bushes behind which she had delivered the pocket-book to Giles Danforth. She shrugged her pretty shoulders.

"You're dippy, Tobe; you suspect every respectable man who sits down to tie his shoestring. You've too much imagination and too sharp observation; that's what makes suspiciousness!"

"I *does* natchelly observe things," Tobias plumed himself modestly.

"You certainly do; and then your imagination gets busy and you're thinking all sorts of fool things. I tell you something. Less you'n me say 'bout this whole business better we'll git along with white folks."

"Dat's de truff," sighed Tobe, "white folks is sho' cu'se!"

Despite her light treatment of Tobias' suspicions, Lily Pearl made enough of them, herself, to give

them to Giles at the first opportunity. Nor did he laugh at them, as she half expected. He considered a moment with a graver look than she had ever seen on his features, saying: "I wonder, did the chap see us, do you reckon, when you handed the loot over to me? And is he lying low now, hoping a chance to pot me on the way home? It wouldn't do any good unless I were by myself; for he couldn't get the stuff. But if—" here he broke off and fell to musing with knitted brow and grimly smiling mouth. Finally he nodded with the air of one who has grasped his decision, and said:

"I reckon we'll get the money safe to the bank at Galen to-night. Lily Pearl, you let it slip out, will you, that I want the grays put into the runabout, right straight, the minute we get back; and I asked you about the Galen road, was it all right?"

"Yes, sir," said Lily Pearl. But in a second she added with a little hesitation, "There's a big patch of trees on the way to Galen; an evil-doer could hide easy behind them and shoot with a rifle, and then light out, sir."

"I'm considering that, Lily Pearl," said Giles.

"Yes, sir," said Lily Pearl; but, as she walked away, she shook her head in a dubious fashion. Her doubts did not prevent her obeying to the letter. The cavalcade set forth in the order of the morning on their return home. Lee and Giles rode alongside the surrey, and Danton followed closely.

"What kinder coon is dat, onyhow?" grumbled

Tobias, " 'pears lak he aims to 'sociate wid de buckra stiddier wid de cullud folks, an' he ben 'sinuatin' dat we-all bes' hab no truck wid Mist' Merlin what done raise us sech a heap er money—I kain't mek him out, nohow; an' I doan like him far's I got."

"There you go off again!" cried Lily Pearl. "Mr. Danton's been raised with white folks pretty near all his life; and they set a whole lot of store by him; he's fixing to build a big school for colored people and be the president—"

"Mr. Roosevelt'll never *let* 'im; he'll git shot or lose he job like dem fellers at Brownsville! De w'ite folks ain't never gwine stan' a nigger president—"

"Not president of the United States, president of a college!"

"De w'ite folks nev' stand fo' no cullud presidents of *nary,*" persisted Tobias sullenly; "all de buckra ev' did gib we-all an' all dey ev' will gib, ben de truck dey ready t' frow away, de skin an' de bones! An' fo' dat dey git de blood an' de sweat of we-all dat dey specks us offer on ouh bendid knees!" Lily Pearl surveyed him with a curious smile.

"Well, sir," she said in her gentlest tones, "do you eat skin and bones, Tobias Montgomery? How many white folks in this country gets as fine a dinner as you have every day of your life or has the chance to save's much of their wages? What's the job you'r honing fo'? Boss of the plantation or going to congress?"

"I ain't speakin' fo' *me*. I knows I ain't eddicated; I doan' speck nuffin' better'n to wuk hard an' stiddy all de days er my life; an' I ain't rebellin'; I likes to wuk w'en tain't too hot wedder; but does you guess ary cullud man gwine git de big t'ings? No, he ain't."

"He can get money; and he can have a nice house and horses and a piano, and everybody speak pleasant to him on the road and wish him well. What you want mo'?"

"I wants *'jestice;* I wants less discriminatin'. W'ite man steal a milyun dollars an' he's great rich man; nigger liff a chicken an' it's shoot 'im wid a shotgun!"

"That ain't color, that's bigness of the thieving! Now, Merlin he ain't stole a milyun; but he's stole fifty thousand dollars, mo' o' less; an' *he* doesn't get no gun play! He's admired by all the fool niggers whose money he steals—like you; and a brave colored gentleman comes along and tries to expose him and help you-all and you turn and want to tear and rend him; and you-all call that standin' by yo' color!"

Tobias wavered, but still withheld surrender. "Onyhow, Merlin doan put on dog lak dis yere felfer; he come 'long mighty complimentary an' perlite an' ax 'bout my 'ealth—"

"Mighty perlite to yo' wife, too, I reckon," Lily Pearl flashed; and instantly recoiled at the sudden and piteous change in the black man's face; fury and

a dull misery struggled together; the mild, commonplace creature was transformed.

"Dat's a lie, dey done lied t' yo', Sist' Rutherford. He ben gone 'way Norf; he didn't ben in dese yere pyarts 'tall, w'en she done run 'way; 'sides, I knows fo' a fac' dar didn't ben nare truck 'tween 'em; kase a letter done come ayfter she ben gone; an' I open it an' got Miss Lee read it; an' thar didn't ben nary wrong, unproper wud in it; an' in it he sends regards to yo' good 'usban' w'om I gretly desteems."

Lily Pearl made no response beyond the enigmatical one of "Well, *sir!* Have you got the letter?" Tobias had the letter; he had kept it by him in some obscure impulse to vindicate his wife in one direction if in no other; he watched Lily Pearl's handsome face as she read, impassively. All he got was the remark in a neutral voice, "Well, there isn't no wrong in *that* letter. I don't guess you had oughter go gunning for Brother Merlin fo' *that!* But plenty other folks have cause to try to catch him, if you haven't."

"Mebbe I done suspected Lucy May wrongful," —Tobias' voice was wistful—"you 'lows I *did?*"

"I didn't been here, as you know, Brother Montgomery; an' I'd rather not pass opinions, but you know you do suspect right easy, Brother Montgomery."

"I sho' does. Tain't right nor Christian," repented Tobias.

"Mr. Danton, now, for example"—Lily Pearl re-

turned the subject of talk to where it belonged—"you ain't treating *him* right. He needs the help of all the leading colored men—"

"But he doan' associate wid 'em; look a' him right now—"

"I *am* looking at him," returned Lily Pearl composedly, "and he's heading his horse right our way and you heah me? he'll ride 'long side us, rest of the way."

In which surmise Lily Pearl proved quite correct, for Danton rode very pleasantly and courteously with them to the very house gate.

CHAPTER IX

THE WARNING

GILES did not inform Lee of the strange finding of the treasure and the stranger vindication of her father. He pledged his aunt and Lee's kinswoman to equal reticence, promising, "I'll tell you all why later, after I get the money safe in bank." Perhaps he was not sufficiently grateful for their docility and confidence in him; youth takes a great deal of consideration and trust in its ability for granted. Keeping his plans to himself, he summoned the clerk of the plantation store, a tenant whom he liked, the mill boss, and one of the mill hands. These men were in his office for twenty minutes. On leaving him they took horse and rode away by twos, in different directions. Ten minutes later Giles appeared, muffled to the ears in his winter greatcoat with a heavy cap on as well. "Gets cold driving at night," he remarked, "and a drop in the temperature is due any night now." His aunt marveled over such unprecedented forethought. But she said nothing until she came outside to bid him good-by, bearing the two thermos bottles, which she had given him, filled with hot coffee, and a box

of sandwiches. Then she whispered: "You are not going to ride to the bank with that money, *alone?*"

"Certainly not," he comforted her gaily, "I'm foolhardy, but I'm not fresh. Besides, nobody knows anything about the plunks." He bent to kiss her. "You're sharper than a meat-ax, Aunty!" he cried as he drove away.

Only in a measure relieved, Agatha watched the red wheels spin down the road between the leafless trees fringing the slash; and it was with an unaccountably heavy heart she walked around the house before returning to her guests. She saw Lily Pearl on her kitchen porch talking amicably with some one, presumably a man, judging from the foot, which was the only sign of his presence, since he stood on the other side of the angle of the wall, this one large, ill-clad foot advanced. Had she seen the fellow's whole figure, she might or might not have recognized him for the man who had stepped on the little shabby bag at the railway crossing, a month before. She herself always believed that she would have known him and that such knowledge might have turned aside the bolt of fate. But she passed unwitting, and one chance of Lily Pearl's rescue passed with her.

As little as she noticed the negro did he notice her. His eyes were fixed on Lily Pearl's face, but with no trace of hostile feeling, rather with the easy curiosity of a friendly gossip, such as negroes love.

"Whar at de boss gwine?" he asked.

"Galen, he sayd," returned Lily Pearl indifferently.

"Gwine be plum' dark 'fore he gits back. I heard tell road was right miry, ayfter you does git into de bottom."

"Reckon 'tis, too," responded Lily Pearl, "I'm sure glad 'tis him and not me driving; but he's going and Mr. Brick Johnson, and Mr. Charley Carroll and two of the mill men going with him."

"What you reckon's up? A lynchin'?"

"They all didn't ask *me*. But I know they're got their guns."

"Looks like they're layin' fo' somebody."

"Looks like, sure 'nough; but there's no telling about white folks. What *you* seeking here in these parts, Lafe?"

"Mostly you, I reckon, Lily Pearl; you didn't treat me fair that time I seen you on de cyars. You didn't tell me you-all was fixing to come here?"

"Didn't I?" carelessly; "well, that sure didn't look like I wanted you-all to waste your money following me, did it?"

"You got any torrer husband, Lily Pearl?"

"I haven't, and I don't aim to have. I got back my name and my liberty and I aim to keep 'em both. But I doan' feel unfriendly, Lafe, and I wish you well."

She made as if to go; he detained her.

"You got a great rich lady to the house, I hear tell, reckon you'll git big Christmas gift."

"I ain't worryin' 'bout my Christmas gift; but I am worryin' a right smart 'bout my pig in the oven. Mis' Sally and Miss Lee are staying with we-all, all night. Didn't nobody eat sca'sely nothing when we got home and had luncheon, and they'll be starving by dinner, so I'm obliged to have pig done perfect; and I can't rightly expect miracles and it's cooking itself right, so I can't stay out heah no longer with you."

Lafe did not seem concerned about the pig; he kept to his subject.

"Say, Lily Pearl, maybe dat great rich lady f'om de Norf give you some her fine jewelry."

"She left it all up North."

"Then she'll give you money, that's better; she's got a heap, I reckon."

"Dunno. But I do know I smell scorchin'. Good evenin', Lafe."

But Lafe stood between her and the door, now unable to tear his fancy away from Miss Danforth's munificence. Did she give the house servants much money? He'd heard that she gave each of them a five-dollar gold piece for what they did when the boss was sick. To this Lily Pearl offered neither assent nor denial; she told him obliquely that Miss Agatha didn't give *her* any gold piece; she gave her a check; she almost always used checks; she—here Lily Pearl tittered softly—she was afraid of burglars, so she wouldn't keep much money and she always locked her door, and Miss Matilda used to

pile things against it before the lock was fixed; and the same with her own bedroom door.

"Huh!" grunted the man in scorn, "there never did be a burglar in Montaigne. The old general never did lock his doors, not even his corn crib nor his chicken house."

"Well, we-all do lock up; and we got good locks now. Well, I am obliged to go, Lafe."

"Lily Pearl, I is terrible hongry. Cayn't you give me a hand-me-out?"

"Not here, Lafe. But if you'll come round about eight to my house—it's the white one with green blinds and the gyarden—I'll give you a good meal for the sake of old times. I will so; and then, Lafayette Meadowes, I give you a friendly warning, trouble waits on you in these pyarts—you best light out."

"Jess' you say, honey," responded the man with unexpected meekness; "I'll go over to you' house an' wait on de log by de river; I won't trubbil you nary."

Perhaps it was two hours, perhaps it was three ere Lily Pearl walked homeward. A little to her surprise, more to her relief, Lafe lounged into sight with a humorous reminder of "dat ar supper." She supplied him bounteously; but the provision was neatly packed in a box and the coffee was in a bottle.

"You ain't 'lowing I shall part lips with you, is you?" he demurred; to which she replied frankly: "Sooner you are on the road, Lafe, better 'twill please me, and better for you."

"Who's that white nigger you-all got playin' a mandolin wid you?"

"That's my lodger, and he's learning Antoinette to play."

The man glared about him; his handsome face lowering. He flung a vile word at her, muttering between his teeth, "For two bits I'd stay and cut him to ribbons."

"Lafe, you're a plumb idiot! He ain't nothing more to do with me than you have; except he never did say a uncivil word to me nor any other lady—"

"You call yo'seff a lady, do you?"

"I sure do; mebbe I ain't such a terrible *good* lady, but my mother raised me to be a lady, and a lady I am and always was, and for that gentleman, you better be 'fraid of him; he dared do what there ain't a colored man in the state of Arkansas dare, he helped Mr. Giles bury and burn up that wicked old conjure-man. He ain't afraid of you-all ayfter that."

The other's anger ebbed as swiftly as it rose; he held out his hand, speaking softly, "Well, I didn't mean to mad you, Lily Pearl, and I'm ready to marry you ary day you'll name; and I'll settle down; an' jine de ch'uch over agin—"

"Not this church, if you be so kin', Lafe; I doan' want to mad you, but they-all here know too much 'bout you. Tobe seen you spyin' on them at the slash, and I slewed him off; but I mistrust Mr. Giles is suspicious, too. So, make haste!"

"Sho' I will, honey, an' t'ank you kindly; dough I didn't ben doin' nuffin' wrong, I'll go, all right, now. You-all wudn't jess shake hans an'—"

"Some one's coming!" was all Lily Pearl's reply; and instantly the negro bounded behind a tree and made off with extraordinary lightness of foot and agility. Lily Pearl remembered how his wonderful physical strength and swiftness had caught her girlish admiration; and she shook her head. "Yes, Lafe, you can run like a deer," she thought, "you could catch up to Mr. Giles now, with a short cut, but I don't guess you'll try; and I don't guess it would have been him that would get hurt if you did catch up to him. Maybe I was foolish to warn you, though. I'd sure be safer with you underground. Oh, well, I reckon you'll stay 'way, now, from Montaigne." She walked back singing an eerie negro melody which her grandmother's mother had crooned over her cradle, not a word of which she understood, but the wailing mystery, the voiceless longing of it thrilled Agatha Danforth as she listened, walking on the veranda in the darkness.

CHAPTER X

"THE SOULS OF BLACK FOLKS"

WITHIN the cabin all was warm and bright. The flames leaped up the great black chimney from the fragrant hickory logs. The big lamp was lighted, casting soft gray shadows on the flowery wall paper, and painting deeper shadows on the bent figure of Aunt Chloe, crouching in the red-cushioned rocking-chair, in afternoon tidiness of red and yellow turban and white apron. Aunt Chloe smoked her pipe in the peace of a good conscience and an approving stomach; for the supper had been of unusual excellence, even for Lily Pearl. Danton had the other rocking-chair, and Antoinette, on his knee, picked at the mandolin. She was a pretty little mortal of five years or so, with silky curls, a complexion of yellow cream and perfectly molded little limbs and hands; indeed, she might have come out of one of Tintoretto's pictures, being as delicately chubby and little darker of tint.

"I does love make music!" she lisped happily.

"No, lambie," cried a tender voice of reproof, "I do love music, you ought to say; the other ain—isn't proper, nice talk."

Antoinette was very docile; she repeated her phrase at once and was rewarded with a gay little tune on the mandolin. Aunt Chloe puffed on her pipe and listened, well pleased. She knew Danton's grandmother and his brother; she cherished her own plans regarding him and Lily Pearl.

The room was a curious epitome—so Danton had already described it to a gifted colored girl in Boston—of Lily Pearl's artistic development. "She has got out of the fundamental, garish stage," he wrote, "of crude glowing colors and grotesque forms into the pseudo-refinement of the culturines. I presume in New Orleans and Memphis, where she was a famous caterer, she saw the like of them in homes where she went professionally; for, curiously enough, some of the things she has are very, very good. There is an old pie-crust table, genuine pie-crust, Miss Effie, and a noble four-poster bed, and she has among pictures that give me pain, one or two genuine old prints. And these good things she, herself, really likes best. So you perceive, Miss Effie, that our race may have taste even in darkest Arkansas."

Danton remembered that letter despatched two days before with a kind of pang. He hadn't meant to make fun of this kind creature who admired his courage so trustfully, and who had soothed his pain and humiliation as no one had soothed him since his mother died.

"Did you know my mother, Aunt Chloe?" he

asked suddenly, "she was the best woman in the world!"

"Dat ar's de way to talk," cried the old woman, "dese young niggers kain't find nuffin good 'cept in eddication outer books. A young gell wharf kain't make a batch o' light braid, an' her beds ain't aired onct a week, she sets up for bein' eddicated 'kase she kin read de newspapers—she doan' nev' read her Bible, no suh! No wonder deir husbands git light in deir min's 'count o' not havin' nuffin decent to eat; an' dey qua'le an' dey pyarts an' dey murders, an' all sech lak ondecent doin's! An' de men pussons does be jest's bad. Kain't handle a hoe proper no mo'; gotter res' up de endurin' while. Wuk so slow de weeds come a-runnin' a'ter dem! De young folks nowadays is all sp'iled, plum' spi'led, lak plums dat's rotted fo' dey ripe!"

"Oh, there's good ones left," Lily Pearl cheered her, "and I guess there'll be mo' coming."

The old woman grunted, but as she rammed the tobacco deeper into her pipe her gaze softened. Danton told the child fairy tales in his beautiful voice; feeling strangely at peace, almost happy. He was composing a letter to a friend and classmate, a negro, also, who sympathized with all his ambitions; these were the sentences running through his head while the little head against his shoulder grew heavy and the big, dark eyes were screened by the long lashes: "Yes, Louis, we are up against it; you're right. I didn't half realize the wall we have to

climb until I came South; the wall's there all right North, but there are vines and flowers about it and we can get a foothold now and then. We feel their infernal Anglo-Saxon arrogance through their civil phrases and their condescension, but Lord God! it isn't the blunt, brutal thing it is here.

"Why, you know Miss Danforth and what she has done for me; you had dinner at her house with me once; charming house, delectable dinner and nothing could exceed her politeness. She *is* a lady. And she treated us as if we belonged to her own class, didn't she?

"Well, here, I should no more be asked to a meal with the family than their houseman or their coachman! My dark skin is more of a barrier than any social condition could be. To show you—do you recall a very pretty blond girl, about twenty-three or four, Miss Danforth's own maid? Do you know, she is here now—not as maid, promoted to be Miss Danforth's secretary and companion, ostensibly, and taking her meals with them, but putting on Miss Danforth's shoes and mending her clothes exactly as before. Can't you find the key? *I* can; Miss Matilda can not be allowed to eat with *us*.

"So she mounts the social ladder to prevent black hands touching her skirts. Do you catch on? And she doesn't realize that a certain dark gentleman who wouldn't have looked twice at a lady's maid is looking very hard at Miss Danforth's secretary. Why not? Isn't this the only just and humane way and

the wisest solution of the problem? Frederick Douglass believed it to be. Am I not three-fourths white to one-fourth black? Why shouldn't I turn to my grandfather's race rather than to my mother's? As to Miss Effie Lathrop, she is a young lady whom I admire and esteem immensely; but honest, old man, you, not I, are the lucky fellow. Our letters might be published in the *Transcript* as interesting discussions on ethical and ethnological themes.

"And now I am running on about the ladies, I want to withdraw all that tommyrot I wrote you anent my fascinating landlady, my dusky Venus Anadyomene, I called her, more shame to me, and retailed a lot of the vile gossip barnyard communities seem to breed as they do flies. Well, Louis, cut it out! Forget it! It's lies and rubbish. I am come to respect Mrs. Rutherford and feel gratitude to her beyond my telling. She is one of the best of women and the most refined in all her walk and conversation. And, O Louis, such a cook! It is such a peaceful, wholesome, clean sort of life I am living here with these kind, good people. I am actually supplying the pulpit of the little church and trying to lift their groping morals into the light, *moi, qui parle*. Maybe a little light will seep in on me, in the process, even me! I stay two or three days a week with my dear old grandmother and then I come here.

"I have found out all we need about Merlin. A rotten egg; but if we break him, he will splash the whole race! He is a conscienceless wheedling scoun-

drel. And his moral life is leprous. Louis, it's that part of our race's condition makes my heart sick. Since freedom came we have used it to acquire every vice of our conquerors. And vice is not banished in the fields. I am not an oppidan, you know well; my heart turns to the grass and flowers and the sweet, growing corn; but I can see that for sheer, bald, vulgar, repulsive vice, the fundamental impulses naked and unashamed, the country can beat the city hollow! But the country is better, as well as worse, and this family life here is so wholesome, so cheerful, so clean.

"Talking of cleanliness, I've a bath-tub which has some pipes and hot and cold water, the plumbing done by no less a person than Giles Danforth, esquire, who was rather a mighty man in Harvard, in spite of his bumptiousness and his brag, and here is next to General Montgomery as It. There never was a house cleaner or more sanitary than this. Mrs. Rutherford hires a hapless young woman who spends each day under the Spartan discipline of the old dame; and who can make beds and clean rooms as well as a nurse in a hospital." Danton's train of thought snapped as the little head fell forward; with infinite gentleness he laid it straight, saying, "I think, mamma, that little Antoinette wants beddy-bye now, for sure."

He carried the child into the neat chamber beyond and would have helped the mother further had she not declined; and when he went back to the room

he sat before the fire with his writing portfolio untouched on the table. He sat musing until Lily Pearl returned, so deep in his own perplexities that he did not notice that she started at every stray sound. Rousing himself, after a while, he began to question her about cooking; how did she learn? Quite frankly she owned her obligations to Antoine Latour.

"What sort of man was he?" inquired Danton, a drift from the gossip lodging in his mind.

"He was a perfect gentleman and a mighty kind man," answered Lily Pearl with a little sigh; "and he did wear the prettiest neckties. I reckon that's how Antoinette comes by her love for colors; I'm rather sober-sided myself."

Danton, reared in Massachusetts, gasped a little at her frankness; it was so clear that she regarded the relation as blameless and not to be hidden.

"Is—is he dead?" he stammered out of his bewilderment.

"I don't guess he is," answered Lily Pearl placidly; "but we pahted. I coaxed him to go back to his main wife in France. We pahted right friendly."

It struck Danton as puerile inanity, but he couldn't help the question. "Didn't he feel bad to leave Antoinette?"

Lily Pearl laughed her silvery peal and ripple of mirth. "Laws! he didn't suspect about Antoinette; she wasn't born till ayfter he got to France; she and Antoine. His name was Antoine Henri

Anne, and being twins, I called her Antoinette Anne, and the boy Antoine Henri. I certainly did feel lonesome when little Antoine died, and I wished he could have seen them; but I knew it wasn't best. He never would have gone if he knew 'bout those children; he was so petted on children. I never did let him know 'bout them. But—"

Her light voice changed. "I got the notion to make my will, Mr. Danton; we all can't count on length of days, and I sure do want to make things right for Antoinette; so if I go I wrote a letter to her father and I've been looking for some one to see that letter goes all right, and—mebby Miss Agatha will, an' would you help her?"

"Indeed I will; but I don't expect ever to have the chance," said Danton; "you're young and well and strong—"

"There's other ways of dying than sickness," said Lily Pearl. "I'm ever so greatly obliged to you, sir; it sure does make me feel easy."

The old grandmother was sleeping, her pipe laid aside, her Bible now on her knees.

The talk languished, yet Danton felt no sense of embarrassment, only a creeping irritation against that Frenchman. The story *was* true, then. Well, what did it import to him? He could not drown his ambitions and marry an uneducated woman of his own race, with a smirched character, and he wasn't the hound to betray the confidence of these simple, kind people. He had his destiny before him.

He must fulfill it, and if happiness should not blossom by the wayside; there were other things in life. But what a profile! What grace as she walked, what music in her voice; it seemed to sweep over his heart-strings and make them vibrate! What an arm with the soft darker outline of the yellowish brown! What exquisite lines of throat and shoulders! And how infinitely soothing her sympathy was! These white women did not know what sympathy was. She couldn't have really cared for that Frenchman who could leave her so carelessly. And he knew that she had never loved the brutal creature who had been her husband. Some aura of indestructible innocence and pride of soul was about her which she had carried through her hideous experiences unharmed. Perhaps it was that she had never consciously done wrong; that she felt toward her own lapses as a man might have felt in the same case; and that in whatever adventure of the senses she might have had, her heart had never been touched. The only beings who had stirred the depths of her nature were her children. For them he was sure she was capable of any sacrifice.

He was roused by her voice: "Ain't that horses' hoofs, Mist' Danton? You-all mind looking out the door?"

He reported that it was only Mr. Danforth riding down the avenue.

"Sure enough," she said absently; but unperceived she drew a tiny little sigh of relief. In a moment

she went on: "I reckon I feel a little trembly, sir; it has been queer like this evening."

"You mean about that old voodoo man?"

"Shucks, no; I don't mind about *him;* he's got his deservings and been burnt up at last, him and his fool prophecies. No, but I have been studying about po' Mist' Ralph that was killed alongside that very slash, nine years ago. I want to tell you something that I nev' did tell anybody and I nev' do aim to tell any white folks. The very evenin' po' Mist' Ralph got killed, and nigh's I could fix the time ayfterwards to it, about that hour, I was walking half a mile or so from that place, going to visit. I was walking on the footpath that runs t'other side the road, but I could look over through the trees; and I saw a man loping through the woods fast, fast. I don't know if he did see me, I don't know if he didn't. He was going mighty fast! That man was my husban', Lafe Meadowes. I wondered how come he was back at Montaigne; and whether he would trouble me; and I made up my mind to leave mighty briefly, next morning; but nex' morning when I come to get up I heard all about the murder; and, Mist' Danton, I nev' did paht lips 'bout seeing Lafe; for I got it into my head as how that nigger had followed Mist' Ralph and shot him. You know Mist' Ralph lost his pistol. Lafe was working in the blacksmith's shop at that very time, he was doin' odd jobs. We'd pahted, and he'd chased me but he hadn't got me, and I was keepin' mighty clear of

him. And he came back heah for a spell, 'lowing I might come see my gran'; but I was in a good place at Memphis and didn't stir. But he was heah, and I wouldn't wonder one bit if he took that pistol his black self. He surely did leave mighty sudden 'bout then."

"But did he have any chance—"

"Oh, yes, sir, plenty chance. You know how 'tis when company is coming on a plantation and the one that does the job isn't on hand, why they put some one else in. I know one day Lafe helped wash dishes at the big house, and he might have stole Mist' Ralph's pistol then. He was always covetous of gun things. And he left the plantation mighty soon after. 'Twas after he left, I believe, that Mist' Ralph found the pistol gone, but he kept it in a drawer down-stairs, and for all he was knowing it might have been gone a day or week. He hardly ever went to that drawer. Just happened he wanted to show Miss Lee, who was a little trick then, 'bout hitting a target. But I never told anybody what I suspicioned. 'Twouldn't be right, I thought. Only, Mr. Danton, nobody else but me ever did see Lafe that time. When I asked about him, careless like, you know, they all sayd he'd gone to New Orleans. So I made my visit out and went back to Memphis; and I never did say nothing 'bout seeing Lafe. But he caught me in Memphis and he would have killed me for sure if he hadn't been stopped. He did kill poor Rastus Lamar that stopped him and cut Sist'

Emmy Rogers, cut me a bit, too, holdin' on to him. But it didn't do him any good, though he did get free, for they all caught him down in New Orleans six months after; and they sent him to the pen. I never said no mo'n I was 'bliged to in the court, and they all wasn't so suah's I was he aimed to kill me, so he got off with ten years. But some way I can't help studying: *'Was* it him killed Mist' Ralph?' "

Danton had been sitting with a frown of anger, which he found it difficult to change into judicial severity. "It might have been better if you had told General Montgomery about your suspicions, Sister Rutherford," he said coldly.

"Well, Brother Danton, tain't so easy to go back on your own color and the man you was married to once. He'd have spent his last cent on me, Lafe would, and how he would laff when he'd bring me things and I'd like them! I cayn't forget such times if he did be mean to me."

"I see," said Danton; "yes, I see, but I'm glad you've told me; and be sure to tell me if he ever tries to come here and annoy you again."

But she did not tell him of her ex-husband's reappearance, or even of Tobias' suspicion. Neither did she let any misgivings of her own keep her awake; she bade Danton good night with her usual cheerfulness; and alone, she laughed out loud. "That was the time you both got fooled," chuckled she. "That Lafe loitering round and getting his alibi all ready 'gainst he might need it; and Mr. Giles

smothering himself up so's a bullet wouldn't hurt him and riding off like he was all by his lone; and those tother men fixing to spy on any person, no doubt waiting on Lafe in the woods. I bet anything he saw them first and knew they catch him; and so come back a-running! I reckon, though, I saved him by putting him on his guard and I scared him off stealing from Miss Agatha, too—well, sir; wouldn't he r'ar and charge if he knew I'd thwarted his wickedness! I reckon he did kill poor Mist' Ralph, but he was scared to go and ride in that slash ayfter the money. Then he got to honing for it, so he came back. Well, 'tain't no time of night to be studying on such things!" She laughed again. "I sure am glad I'm shet of that nigger!" sighed she.

Yet, although she went to sleep with the readiness and security of a child, she woke up once, moaning, and sat up in bed, her pretty white-draped bed, with Antoinette's dark curls on the pillow beside her, and the moonlight fair to see; and she put her slim fingers to her throat and exclaimed: "Lord! I can mos' feel the bruises now. Go 'long, nigger! I'm mos' 'fraid to go to sleep fo' dreaming of you agen. Nex' time, I'll sure let Mr. Giles shoot you!"

CHAPTER XI

THE VOICE OF THE STERN DAUGHTER

THAT same night Giles told Lee. December though it was, they were walking on the veranda, where still the rose trees and honeysuckle were green, faintly colored by the moonlight. Giles could not understand the manner of Lee's reception of the story. She heard him through with a quivering face; and, at the last, burst into tears. The lad stared awkwardly, feeling a keen desire to comfort his little comrade, yet sorely straitened as to expression. Perhaps he said the best thing possible when he stammered: "Your father must have been an awfully brave man!"

"He was! He was!" sobbed Lee. "But to have to know that man would kill him and to throw the package and then—Monsieur Giles, don't you know anything, who killed him?"

"I know that some fellow was skulking round there, this week. Yes, this very day; if Tobe's right, *he* saw Lily Pearl give me the pocket-book. She told me Tobe saw him. I hoped he'd chance a shot at me if I rode alone to Galen, just where that little hurd is, you know, on the ridge. Splendid

hiding-place for robbers and assassins! I made sure he'd try to pot me there and I had the boys hid like Indians waiting for him. But he didn't come. Didn't have a thing happen or see a soul this side the creek except good old Uncle Isaac and Aunt Rebecca, who'd been to Galen 'visitin'.' And I all wadded up in my foot-ball togs under my coat, all ready! But I reckon Tobe got dippy as usual over nothing."

"Monsieur Giles, I think Tobe *did* see, but the man ran away. He got scared up. Yes, Monsieur Giles, do you think *grandpère* will let me spend a heap of that money, so we can get the splendid detectives to come and find that man? And do you think they will let me go to Galen to see him when he shall be hanged?"

"I hope not, certainly," said Giles.

He did not know Lee in the mood that was upon her. Her stern, young face was unlike the face which was turned pityingly on every animal except the English sparrow. Lee's gifts with "beasties" were the plantation pride. Uncle Isaac, the Montgomery coachman, groom and veterinary, had taught her all the horse lore which he brought from Kentucky, and General Montgomery had added his own faith in kindness to animals.

She gentled the colts by degrees and subtle, unobtrusive approaches. Before they realized they were eating sugar out of her hand; before they dreamed of obedience she was leading them about with a

halter. The next step was the bridle. Then came the plow gears. The horse was "gentled," not "broken." He was not nervous because he had never been frightened. He knew that he must obey his master, but he expected kindness from him. On the old general's plantation the unforgivable crime was "being mean to beasts." The man who made a hog squeal when he shot him, who overloaded or misused a horse or mule, that man had a bad quarter of an hour. And one particularly callous farmer found to his woe that there was a clause in his lease voiding it in case of cruelty to animals; wherefore he was turned off the place despite much pleading, promises and profanity, to the general's considerable loss but to the farmer's entire destruction.

Lee, if possible, was more tender of heart than her grandfather; yet here was Lee turning her hazel eyes on him darkened with relentless purpose. Here was Lee wanting to go see a man hanged.

"Not if I can prevent," said Giles, "that's not the way for a *jeune fille bien élevée* to talk."

"Mais moi, je n'ai pas été bien élevée," Lee flung back with a shrug of her thin shoulder.

"I am sure," pursued the censor, "that Rebecca wouldn't feel that way nor Di Vernon nor—nor—Mary Queen of Scots."

"Maybe not Rebecca, but I reckon Mary Queen of Scots would have gone to Ruthven's execution; *and liked it!*"

Giles tried to brush the cobwebs off his memories

of Mary Queen of Scots, but found no comfort when he succeeded, so he contented himself with a disapproving silence.

"I reckon Miss Gladys Vassall wouldn't feel that way," said Lee sadly, "but your Aunt Agatha would, I reckon."

"Decidedly not," said Giles; "why, she's the most merciful and conscientious sort you ever saw."

"Yes, the conscience. That's why. It would be her duty. It is my duty. No matter how I should feel, it is my duty. Because you see when he was killed, my poor father, I went out under the stars, one night, there by the slash, and I learned out of a book a solemn oath of revenge; and I said it there. I swore that I would spend the first money I should get to bring the murderer to justice and I would go to see him die. I thought I should *like* it, then. Now, I am not so sure; but it is my honor, Monsieur Giles, my duty."

"So! Duty, stern daughter of the voice of God, is it? She speaks and we have to obey, being Anglo-Saxons. The southern conscience isn't so hectic as the conscience of New England, but it seems about as bossy when it gets started. Well, Kid, the only way out, I see, is for me to run down that fellow and kill him, first. I'll do my possible, as you French people would say."

"I am not French, I am American and Hungarian."

"Anyhow you talk French."

"That is because I do not know any Hungarian; but when I can afford it, I shall buy Tokai's novels and learn."

Giles pounced upon the diversion of her thoughts. "You can afford it now. It and several other things. What would you like most to do, Kid?"

"I don't know will there be any money after," said Lee thoughtfully. "If there is I should like to paint the house."

"Great! Why not do it now, and surprise the general and Mrs. Phil?"

"But there may not be any left."

"Sure to be. I'll bet you the cost of the paint there is; and I'll advance you the money. If I lose you don't pay back; if I win you do. Plain sporting proposition. Shake hands on it, and I'll go telephone the head of the firm where I get my paints. At his house. If he's there he will send the stuff over to-morrow and we can get the paint mixed to-morrow before sundown, and start in painting the next day bright and early. Put on a big force and we'll have the first coat on before they get back. I'll let you have Tobe and Amos and we can get two more. What do you say?"

It was quite his own Lee who thanked him so heartily and cried, "How you do things, Monsieur Giles! *C'est à merveille!*"

CHAPTER XII

LEE PAINTS THE HOUSE

GILES was as good as his word. The paint cans came the very next afternoon; and the morning after Lee had four men painting and went at the window-sashes in person. She was rather pale, but she had recovered her spirits. Giles beamed upon her paternally. Yet he had not the least idea how Lee was feeling. How could he know, when she never told of it, how many nights she had planned ways and means to save the fifty-five dollars which was her estimate; how was he to guess her ingenious figuring of the proceeds of her poultry yard? Or the relinquishing of the ready-made gown so enticingly drawn in the circular sent her by the missionary manufacturing company which was supplying the South almost under cost? Or the mendings and darnings (Lee loathed her needle as much as she loved the horse, the plane, the saw and the gun), the secret scrimpings, the multitude of disappointments, such as the overflow sweeping the fence down and carrying it off, wire and posts, so that a new fence must be instantly erected and thirty-five dollars taken out of the forty dollars

which she had been a year in accumulating; and the tenants' repairs and the store needing painting so imperiously that the house must wait; growing rustier and dingier and more weather-blotched with each extension of time. Now, it need wait no longer. Lee, in her khaki plantation dress, her braids wound about her head, felt like a general after a victory.

All that morning the work went on prosperously. Agatha admired the industry of the black painters. They did use a good deal of paint on their brushes and there was a tendency to drip, and the surrounding shrubbery was splashed to a degree, but the general effect was pleasing. And the colors chosen, a delicate yellow with white trimmings, suited the old southern mansion.

Agatha wanted Lee's company on the stroll which she was taking with Mrs. Caldwell that afternoon. They were to select a Christmas tree and direct the gathering of mistletoe and holly berries. Lee had meant to go, but now she protested that she could not be spared; she must oversee the work.

"Darkies do very well with a boss," said she, "but they may do anything without one."

"It's a queer feature of the African character that they have no appreciation of values or the relative importance of things," said Mrs. Caldwell. "A darky always uses the best of his material first, and he is just as likely to begin with the back part of the house first."

"Likelier," said Lee; "they started by painting

the kitchen, so if the paint gives out they will leave the front porch unpainted! They had all one side done, so I must let them go on."

But, although she would not listen to the tempter and leave the painters for the delights of a woodland stroll, it was fated that Lee should have to abandon the artist in charge, Amos, the plantation carpenter, likewise brickmason and painter on occasion, to the dangers of his race's temperament; for about twelve, Tom, the stock man, shed his ingratiating grin over the scene, and announced with calm conciseness, "Like fo' you to come ovah t' de big byarn, Miss Lee; de gray hoss done snag hisself on de hinges of de do'."

"Bad?" was all Lee said.

"Yes'm, right bad; reckon he gwine die."

"Those same hinges I told you to mend last Sunday, I reckon."

"Yes'm," with the same equanimity, "I done tole Billy 'bout 'em, but I reckon it slip his min' some ways."

"But I asked you and you said it was mended."

"Yes'm, Billy tole me he'd men' it. I didn't 'low he'd disremember. Dese young cullud boys is so triflin', nowadays, dey w'ars me to a frazzle. I made sho' dat do' ben all mendid."

"You don't go through that door yourself, then, half a dozen times a day? No?"

"Yes'm, I does go frow hit"—for sarcasm is the one barb that pierces the negro's armor of uncon-

cern—"Yes'm, but I didn't look nary, I done hab confidence in Billy."

"Next time you have less confidence and more eyes, *mon brave*. Go a-running for Uncle Isaac. I'll go to the barn; Billy's there?"

"No'm. He done went off visitin'; de gineral say he cud go if he brudder got bad agin. He got de bres' complaint,* you-all knows; an' Billy git de wud yestiddy an' I done lend 'im de claybank an' he done leff."

Lee could have wept; but she knew there was nothing for it but to save the injured horse. For two good hours Uncle Isaac and she labored over the animal, leaving him at the end of the time in fairly good condition.

While she was busy as a reluctant veterinary, Agatha was explaining Danton to Mrs. Caldwell, and Mrs. Caldwell was explaining Lily Pearl to Agatha, while they both gathered holiday garniture of holly and red berries.

"Yes, ma'am, yes, ma'am; I reckon I know what you mean,"—thus Mrs. Caldwell to Agatha. "The boy's naturally decent, only he's been spoiled up North. The best thing the niggro inherits is his affectionate devotion and his sunny nature. You-all are taking them away fast as you can."

"We are teaching them to grow up."

"You're forcing their growth. Now that boy—he'd be a heap happier and a heap better if, instead

*Tuberculosis.

of going to Harvard University, he'd gone into a good private family and learned to wait on table or drive an automobile. Look how much happier Lily Pearl is than he. I think it's something *beautiful* to see anybody enjoy living as Lily Pearl does. She surely *is* pleasant to have about. And did you ever know anybody take the every-day irritations in a nicer spirit?"

"She is pleasant," admitted Agatha, "and always cheerful. How *can* she be? She means to lead a better life I do believe. Then she might feel remorse—"

"Miss Agatha"—Matilda, a disregarded auditor, bore her testimony with a blush—"I don't believe Lily Pearl ever did anything bad enough to feel remorse. I beg your pardon for speaking up; but Lily Pearl is just as honest and clean and tidy and—proper as a white woman."

"Lily is a mighty fine woman," said Mrs. Caldwell. "She is a dark lady, and I think a great deal of her, but her marriage to Lafe Meadowes was a bad thing for her. He was a brute."

"Yes, ma'am," said Matilda; "she told me once that he was the only thing she ever feared, and she would dream sometimes about him grabbing her throat and she'd get the shine of his razor in her dream. But her second husband was a kind man; although they 'parted,' as she calls it, and he went away across the sea."

Mrs. Caldwell's eyes rested very kindly on the

girl's flushed face. "To be sure," said she. "Well, Lily Pearl certainly is a comfort." She changed the subject, and only resumed it when the two women were out of earshot of Matilda, busy helping Sam, the little black boy, pack the woodland spoils in the wagon. Then she began to philosophize. "Now, Lily Pearl, she's a child, too. For all her squalid experiences, she seems innocent. She *is*. She may have lost her virtue, but she kept her innocence. She doesn't feel remorse because she hasn't done anything she thinks wrong—at least very wrong." Agatha shook her head.

"How can there be reformation without repentance for sin, yes, and remorse?" she questioned.

Mrs. Caldwell's little hands impatiently beat the air as she threw her head despairingly back, crying: "My dear friend, you *can't* judge these women as if they were white!"

"Mrs. Caldwell," said Agatha, "I have noticed your tone, every one's tone about negro women; you don't seem to expect them to be—like white women. Don't you know any virtuous negro women?"

The Southerner considered. "Oh, dear, yes, ma'am. There's Aunt Rebecca and Aunt Chloe; I know *several* others, good, pious old souls; and there's Esther, Amos' wife; she's *perfectly* virtuous; she only had one husband she wasn't legally married to. And she was right faithful to him. Well, if you come to that, so was Lily Pearl. As long as she

stayèd with a man she was faithful; if she didn't like him, they parted; and she was just as faithful to his successor. I believe, come to consider, that is where the niggroes draw the line; have as many successive husbands as you please, but have them successive. That's the way nice colored women feel—and it is not so different from some ladies of high white society—only *they* have enough money to pay for divorces with each change.

"You see, Miss Danforth," Mrs. Caldwell continued, "you have to consider what these people inherit. And what we inherit. It is ingrained in our race that men must be brave and women must be pure. But neither of those qualities was demanded in slave times; nor are they now demanded of the African by his own public opinion. Merlin, whom the colored people admire so much, once ran three miles, pursued by a wronged husband. *He* didn't lose caste in any way. While the women like to cast slurs and criticize Lily Pearl, she is asked everywhere in colored circles. All the men would be pleased to death to marry her. Now, while that sort of public opinion prevails, a young colored girl is not going to acquire that shrinking horror of certain failings, which is born in a young white girl. No, ma'am. And you can't expect remorse. But I know one thing, if Lily Pearl doesn't maybe mourn for sin, she can see the beauty of holiness. And follow it. For five years, in her own queer untaught way, she has tried to lead a good life, and I don't only

like Lily Pearl, I respect her. It's women like her who are going to save the African race. But mercy! look at that sun simply tumbling behind the trees! Where has this evening gone to? We must get back to Lee. I dare say she will have most of the house painted. Unless the paint gives out."

"Does that happen?"

"Naturally. You see you can calculate how much paint it ought to take to cover a house; but you never can tell how much paint darkies will use! And when things give out there is the having to order again and putting it off and maybe the money having given out as well as the paint and one thing and another—oh, things on a plantation sometimes wait on for a good while, like Elder Tim's house. He painted it to please his wife, who had begged him to paint for ten years; and they got it all painted except half of the south gable. There the paint gave out. Well, they waited on the paint man, who hadn't any more of the color, and then they waited on the crops, because everybody was plowing or hoeing; and then by the time crops were laid by, it was terribly warm, so they waited on the weather and finally poor Mrs. Tim just gave it up and died, and *then* the elder waited because he said he had painted to suit his wife's taste, and if he was to paint again he'd want to please his second, so he reckoned he'd better wait on *her*. And he's waiting still."

In this fashion did Mrs. Caldwell illuminate the customs of the country. And late that night did

Agatha sit up writing them down, in her third note-book (she having exhausted two), in her minutest hand of write.

Lee returned, as it happened, just as the woodland explorers drove into the yard. The transformed dwelling burst upon them all, simultaneously. The verb is used advisedly since the spectacle was of the nature of a bomb or some high explosive.

The house up to the lower half of the front gable was of a seemly light yellow, but below this dividing line, which was not regularly divided, but rather in steps of color, producing an extraordinary effect, the hue grew lighter and lighter by degrees, also the painting coat grew thinner and thinner until the piazza proper showed only a few streakings of white. And through all the tints ran grimy splotches of an unpleasant appearance.

For a minute Lee could not speak; tired and shaken with her hours of effort and anxiety, she threw one wretched glance over the house, and her lip quivered. But when she did address Tobias, who slunk up looking stolid—the negro attitude when he suspects he has made a mess of his job—Agatha admired her quiet voice, saying, "Tobe, what happened to the paint?"

"Well'm, de hawgs got in an' w'en li'le Benny done chase 'em out, somehows dey ben projickin' roun' de woodhouse; an' dey kinder got mix up wid de paint cans an' topple dem ovah an' dough we done scrape hit up, hit kinder show on de house, an' de

yeller cans dey didn't be nuff so's we had t' make out wid mo' w'ite in 'em. Dey does look cu'se, but I 'lowed de second coat kiver some!"

Lee could not manage a laugh, only a rather miserable smile. "I reckon you did your best, Tobias; but I feel mighty bad to disappoint the general."

However, the general was not to be disappointed; for at this moment Blue Bess cantered into the yard, Giles on her back. He was off it in a hurry; and when he saw the house he uttered a yell of laughter.

"Oh, Giles!" reproached his aunt, with a sidelong glance at Lee, whose pent-up feelings brimmed her eyes. But Giles did not look less amused, although he stopped laughing. "Oh, splash!" he chuckled; "how did it happen?"

When he was told he roared again. And this time Lee winked hard; she even had to kneel and tie her shoe; but she sat up erect and glowing at Giles' next words—he had plumped down on the grass beside her to help— "Cheer up, Kiddo, I've oodles more of paint over to the house, yellow and white. We'll get it all right, to-morrow, before the people come. And no doubt trying to spread the paint to hold out they've made the job of their lives. I noticed the vines weren't smeared as they usually are! Cheer up! And I've been round to see poor Gray Beauty, and he's doing best kind!"

It all fell out even as Giles had promised. The black artists worked by lantern light far into the night and they were up by the dawn. So was Giles;

so was Lee, lest worse befall; but all went well, the color was matched; it was a trim and shining house which greeted the travelers' eyes, on the brow of the hill; and Lee, in her very best frock awaited them, on the snow white veranda. But it was not the child Lee's face which turned toward the road by the slash, listening for the hoofs of the horses on the little bridge. A little while before it had been radiant as a child's face might be; now it was darkened and stern. *"Grandpère* will feel as I do," she was thinking; "we must use the money to find the murderer. Monsieur Giles didn't understand, but *he will."*

Giles did not wait at the gate a moment after the general and Mrs. Phil had alighted. He hurried back home to his aunt.

"How did he feel?" was her instant question.

"He was very much moved," said Giles; "it made me feel pretty queer myself. I think he wanted to offer prayer on the spot."

"I suppose there are several thousands, and the money will be a great help to them."

"The money! Do you think he thought of the money? It was his son's vindication; it was proving that Ralph Montgomery was worthy of his name; that fear, not of his son, but that other people would never do his son justice, had been eating into his heart. Oh, he's the right stuff, that old sport! Mrs. Phil didn't seem to think of the money, either; but she said that it was nice that Lee should have her mother's jewels; it was not the intrinsic value so

much as the priceless associations"—Giles' tone was a very good imitation of Mrs. Phil's gentle enunciation, and he grinned a graceless grin. "I had to drag the treasure in myself. The general agrees with me that the bills must be sent to Washington for redemption, and then, of course, he is going to invest it all for Lee; he has done better in cotton this year; he can afford, he says, to pay for any detectives necessary to hunt down the murderer. But, anyhow, that's my job."

"Of course, he didn't think of the money at first," said Agatha; "I'm ashamed of suggesting it. Well, all along I thought Ralph Montgomery didn't do such a thing. Giles, somehow, we must get one of the Montgomery pictures to give to the general."

It was only after she went to bed that she remembered that, after all the day's struggle, the painting of the house had gone quite unnoticed.

CHAPTER XIII

THE SIMPLE LIFE

THE mild weather held until after Christmas. Christmas was celebrated with unusual pomp. There was a Christmas tree in the school-house and from far and near the "renters" gathered, whole families climbing into the farm wagons, filled with chairs, and quilts to shield the babies. The roadside was a gay sight with wagons and buggies and horses. They had no protection from the weather; they needed none. The stars shone in a gentle sky and the air was like spring.

Agatha described the tree to Henrietta as a "triumphant and dazzling structure," resplendent with candles, cotton snow and popcorn; and she wrote that she was in terror of fire all the time in spite of the pails of water and the men ready with sponges nailed to long sticks. "It caught fire twice," said she, "but they extinguished it cleverly. The sponges were Giles' notion. Nobody seemed in the least excited; I suppose the Christmas trees always catch fire. Besides, their natures are apathetic; they never seem moved; sometimes I wonder if they could be. They are much less emotional than the same class

with us. They smiled over the tree, but there was no effusion of delight. Yet I know they had never seen its like for splendor. I sent to Boston and got a huge box of tinsel and glass gewgaws, and the tree sparkled with imitation icicles and frosted Santa Clauses; and at its foot was a pile of snowballs which opened in two and were filled with the most delectable Pierce candy; and there were oranges and apples; and wonderful blue and crimson and yellow glass balls, and each child had a present, and each older person had either a pipe and its filling, or a subscription to the *Woman's Home Companion* or the *Ladies' Home Journal,* or the *Saturday Evening Post,* the general having a great esteem for these papers, 'as agents of civilization among our young people, madam.' He also believes firmly in tobacco, 'when not adulterated, madam; I do not believe in any of these base palterings with honest foods or stimulants. The pipe or the cigar, madam,' says he, 'are domestic as well as social; they soothe the nerves and incline the mind toward hope.'

"So they all had tobacco. Our gifts were very simple, knives and dollars and tin pails and gloves and mufflers. The general is not rich; and he could not have afforded this gala but for a windfall—indeed, he couldn't afford it to my mind, anyhow, for the few thousands that came he insists belong to Lee, and they are invested for her, but their arrival gave him a feeling of opulence; he made his well-

worn best suit do duty another year, and had the kindly festivity which his soul craved. And all I could get of privilege was the candies and fruits and a Christmas plum pudding for each family."

The Pittsfield friends were much concerned over so long a sojourn in "such a barbarous country where she couldn't have any comforts;" and they gasped with amazement when Henrietta Williams read Agatha's recitals of the alleviations of the simple life; the biweekly hampers of fresh meat and far-southern vegetables and fruits; the game in the woods, the fish in the river, the geese and ducks and hens and guinea-fowl in the poultry yard, the wonderful pigs, the storehouse overflowing with stores from the "best grocery house in the world as well as Boston," the consolation of new-laid eggs and the joy of watching with one's own eyes the sanitary progress of sweet butter from the cow to the churn.

There were more than material delights; Agatha never wearied in praising the Arkansas climate, even when there came a drop of fifty degrees, one night. Snow fell, powdering the brown fields and green roadsides. The privet and honeysuckle, which had given such a relief of verdure to the eye, heretofore, shriveled and blackened piteously. There were no violets in the wilted and crumpled violet beds; and the last rose of winter was gone. The cattle were a sorry sight, humping their lean spines and hanging motionless heads in the shorn cotton rows. Almost as dejected were the negroes who put on all their

available clothes, one suit above another, and crowded the plantation store. The big, whitewashed stove sent a roaring, perilous gush of fire through the interminable joints of stovepipe which Agatha declared fitted so precariously they made her think of dorsal vertebræ, and which she was sure would some day escape from their absurd wire slings and set the store afire.

Nevertheless she protested that she enjoyed the "cold spell." The freezing weather endured barely four days, during which the year's supply of ice came down the river from the ice-plant; and was stored away in the huge ice-house.

Agatha vastly enjoyed watching the workers. It surprised her to observe Sidney Danton among them, working as vigorously as any.

"Yes," Giles explained, "he came to me for the job; and his reason wasn't bad. He says: 'I want to influence these people. I can't unless they believe in me and admire me. I am going to take their church. If I show my muscular strength and my nerve, they will think a heap more of me.' And by jove, he's made good, too."

After the "freeze up" came mild, sunny days, often windy, but not with the raw, bone-freezing northern winds, seldom cold enough for wraps. Agatha began to take long strolls. She loved the forests and the landscape. "These forests which my own nephew is destroying, are wonderful," she wrote Henrietta, "giant cypress and gum trees and

oaks of more varieties than I ever knew existed, splendid, dim aisles of woodland, with arches of limbs which may have waved over the mound builders, whose sepulchers are everywhere in this country. Now, the woods are etchings in rich blacks and purples and the most delicate grays; the articulation of the veriest twigs is drawn—as it is in Dürer's etchings; there are still speckles of red berries on the vines which mist the lower boughs and the huge trunks; and the occasional dead and stripped sycamore, bone-white, stands with a spectral silver gleam amid these gray sentinels. There is a little winding, homely river, fringed all its way by trees and with only vistas of fields and tiny hamlets; and all over these lands grow the single trees which have been spared for shade, elms as beautiful and stately as those of East Street, willow oaks of enormous girth and a Jaques or Diaz sumptuousness of foliage, gum trees and maples and towering black walnut trees.

"This winter landscape has the most unexpected variety; it changes in subtle, surprising, minute ways every day. There are new hues in the earth. The grass one night dull and dead, olive tinted or brown, begins under the next day's sun to be smeared with the tenderest and liveliest green pigment; literally smeared, since the lower part of a blade may be green while the upper is a lifeless dun. Yesterday I picked violets in a sunny nook, and the violet leaves look brightly thrifty. On Christmas day we had

roses from our own bushes on the table. These bits of color help hearten one to an amazing extent. And the fields, the clods of dirt; they also change; the earth shows a different tint almost each day."

The people, as well as the scenery, had a good word from her; although she sighed over their "shiftlessness" and "defiant improvidence."

"But they are so kindly and so wondrous hospitable," said she. "Here is a funny instance of the latter trait. I heard the conversation myself at the store. A comfortable looking matron came in and a boy buying groceries looked up to greet her and ask, 'How's all?'

" 'Oh, we're all stirrin'. How you-all?'

" 'We're tolerable. Why don't you-all come see us?'

" 'No, you come see *us*. Hain't seen you for a right smart. Come nex' Sunday.'

" 'Well, reckon maybe we will if maw's willing.'

" 'That's right. We'll be right glad to see you. Say—*what you say your name was?*' "

Agatha always excepted the Montgomerys from her strictures. Mrs. Caldwell, considerably to her amazement, was become Sally Caldwell and a real friend to her. The general had walked into her heart the first day. And Lee, also to her amazement, was not long in following. Finally she began to like Mrs. Phil. She was penitent to Henrietta for her earlier criticism. "I told you, Henrietta, a while ago, that Mrs. Phil was the most neutral, bromidic

being that I ever had encountered; maybe she is, but she is the most inviolably just and courteous creature also; and I am coming to esteem her cordially. It is true that she never says anything startling; but she never says anything unkind, either; and she has a placid sense that I admire and she is so pretty to look upon, so dainty in her simple clothes, and withal such a good housekeeper. The general said once that he believed that his daughter-in-law could make a pleasant home in a convict camp. Surely one must respect that kind of a gift.

And Agatha made more sweeping exceptions to her accusations against the inhabitants. She took Giles' breath away by offering to finance an electric interurban from Galen to another thriving village through the lower end of the plantation. Galen was the county-seat, a town of some five or six thousand souls, which had a street railway, brick pavings, electric lights, an air dome and a most comfortable inn, where Agatha spent a night, almost moved to tears when she found that she could have a private bath.

The next afternoon on their miry way home, she broached the railway project to Giles.

"I approve of Galen," conceded Agatha. "They have some enterprise, and the houses and yards look very nice. They are not quite simple enough; but I suppose simplicity is culture's last, not first word. But I do wish, Giles, they would clean the streets. The shops look very tidy, but the street outside with

all that litter of newspapers and broken boxes is dreadful!"

"Oh, give us time, Aunty, give us time," Giles laughed, "there is such a thing as bolting reforms so fast you get indigestion."

"Not in *this* country," returned Agatha dryly. "Yet I'm really growing fond of it and of the people," she added, "the life is so reposeful. If only Matilda were more contented; she is so unhappy she gets on my conscience."

Giles declared cheerfully that Matilda would get to enjoying herself after a while. So far, however, no one could suspect Matilda of enjoying herself for a minute. She was the most frankly and abjectly homesick mortal in the world. She sighed for the east wind, and the snow of her native mountains and her scorn of grass and flowers "out of season" was marvelous to see. Instead of losing her dread of "murdering black villains in this desolate spot," it was fed by newspaper stories until it assumed such proportions that she was afraid to go out of doors after sunset and barricaded her locked and bolted door every night.

The story of the finding of the old conjurer's skeleton and Ralph Montgomery's treasure had disastrous effects on Matilda. She felt quite sure that she was in the center of a more appalling network of crime than ever her favorite, Anna Katharine Green, had dared to chronicle. And Matilda had no zest for crime; she liked a peaceful life, where, as she

expressed it to Lily Pearl, "you had some idea in the morning what was going to happen in the afternoon; and unexpected folks weren't always dropping out of the sky on you for dinner."

"Takes mo'n a few extra men persons to dinner to feeze me," chuckled Lily Pearl, "and I don't have to run to the chicken yard, neither. Laws, when there's cream and eggs without stinting and butter right to your hand and such a grocery in the storeroom as we-all keep, it would be scandalous not to be able to get up a dinner in a hurry, without killing chickens and eating them before they rightly know they're dead! I couldn't get my own consent to it."

"Lily Pearl," Matilda cried, admiring her, "don't *anything* ever upset you?"

Lily Pearl laughed richly, eyes and teeth flashing in unison: "Lafe Meadowes p'intedly did upset me a few times with that big fist of his! And once I'd been learning him to write and he got peeved and flung the ink bottle at me, cut my cheek and plumb spoiled my nice clean new shirt waist I'd worked all the week making—I did feel upset then. But that was Lafe's way. He bought me a new piece of cloth, next day. Lafe had his good points, and maybe I'd ought to have stayed longer with him; but I was just wore to a frazzle having to quit my work so often and look out the window to see if he was coming a running, with a razor."

For all her cheerful philosophy over it, Lily Pearl's experience only confirmed Matilda's dark

suspicions of the African. She was sure the slayer of Ralph Montgomery was a negro; she admitted that she had seen him in her dreams; a crouching creature with a razor, of gigantic stature, his face hidden, but the horrible bare arms and hands black.

"And to think," cried Matilda shuddering, "of that awful man prowling round with us so unconscious and maybe planning to shoot some more folks."

"But he isn't prowling now," Agatha tried to soothe her; "the murder was nine years ago."

"Well, we only just found the money," protested Matilda; "and now he'll come back most likely after it and murder *us!*"

"I guess he will give us a very wide berth, Matilda. It would be an unlucky day for *him* if he did come back; for he would be caught and hanged. You needn't worry about him, Matilda, years and years ago he fled back to Memphis, whence he came; and there are a good many chances such a wicked, lawless being met with a violent end before now."

Agatha was quite sincere in her comfort. Giles hadn't taken her into his confidence regarding his suspicions. It is true, on the impulse of the moment, he had been outspoken that day at the slash; and the same evening, pacing the veranda in the moonlight, her fancy half-feigning a sinister wisp of smoke still curling above the treetops of the eastern road, she conned his every word.

But his reasoning had not convinced her. She

was not sure that it was a black man, whose shadow she had seen in the water of the slash; and very far from sure that, black or white, the shadow pertained to Ralph Montgomery's assassin, skulking about the place which held his lost booty.

True, Giles might offer the clue to the mystery; but Agatha, on the other hand, had lived long enough to know that there are often very prosaic and simple explanations for darksome mysteries. A perfectly decent, harmless citizen might have been hunting his lost cow near the dreaded slash, might have mistaken Agatha for an apparition, and might have fled in terror. That he had bare feet was not proved; only that his shoes made no sound. Rubber boots are noiseless and "slinkers" and several other kinds of shoes. Agatha, the descendant of a line of judges, reserved her opinion. And Giles, himself, didn't press his theories. He said: "Well, perhaps; no telling," when she had suggested that the chances were the murderer was a professional criminal from Memphis, who went back at once, and he agreed that Memphis ought to be searched on the chance of some evidence yet remaining. He admitted that it didn't follow that whoever stole the pistol must be the murderer. The thief might have pawned the pistol; the murderer might have picked it up in a pawnshop. Of course, it would be a good notion to hunt up the books of Memphis and New Orleans pawnbrokers. Giles appeared to be of an open mind. In reality, however, the boy stubbornly cherished his theories.

But he did not conceive that it would make for his aunt's peace of mind to persuade her that a blood-stained and desperate robber had been hiding at their elbow. So he did not dispute, he listened with a dutiful politeness, good for his soul.

But the general and Lee got his whole budget of suspicion. "I admit," said Giles, "that the fellow who stole the pistol didn't need to be a murderer because he was a thief; only we can't ignore the possibility that the murderer *was* the thief, either. He may have pawned the pistol and it may have been bought by the man, who was the murderer, maybe a man he or you never set eyes on. We know of at least one place in Memphis where the money and jewels might have been seen by any casual passer-by on the street, that room where they were shown Mrs. Caldwell, the window-shades up and the room lighted. Now, a professional burglar, who happened to have bought the pistol, might have happened to see into that room. The coincidence isn't impossible if not probable.

"And it is both possible and probable that such a man might have tracked Mr. Montgomery to Laocoon and home to the plantation, meaning to get that money somehow. It was a big enough stake to attract first class criminal talent. You can suppose that this adroit professional robber sees his chance when Reuben leaves the buggy, somehow lures Mr. Montgomery out of the buggy and shoots him down before he suspects. That's my aunt's

theory. Well, it isn't mine. I believe that the man who killed him was no stranger to Mr. Montgomery; I think that is why he was able to get him out of the buggy. He wouldn't have got out for a stranger when he was carrying such valuables. Besides, I've inquired in a quiet way. There are half a dozen houses between the slash and here. There are, and there always have been, no end of dogs that way; but there's no record of any barking. There wouldn't be if the man was somebody the dogs knew. I take it the man who stole the pistol is the murderer. I think also that he is a colored man. Now, the question is, how many colored men were on the place at that time who can possibly be suspected? We can look them all up and gradually eliminate the innocent. You'll find *one* will remain."

To the general and to Lee, Giles' plan seemed the best in reach, and the detective whom he brought down to Montaigne "to look at white oak" and who spent the night unsuspected in the general's guest-room, approved with a degree of commendation.

But the general could not put his finger on any man in Perry County mean enough to suspect like that. "How about that blacksmith you had for a while, sir?" asked Giles, "Lily Pearl's husband. He had a vicious temper. He was one I should call a regular mean nigger."

The general shook his gray head. "Lafe Meadowes? I've thought of Lafe myself, but Lafe had

left the country. We heard of him just a little while later in New Orleans. He could prove an alibi, I reckon. He's in the state prison, now, and we might have him examined, but I don't guess you will find out anything, though."

"He is not in the pen," said Giles, "he had his term shortened for good conduct; and he's free—I don't know where."

The general was sorry, on Lily Pearl's account, but he did not suspect Lafe. The detective thought that if any one on the place were guilty the surest way to catch him would be to keep mighty dark about any inquiry. Everybody knew now, thanks to that glib-mouthed Tobe nigger, that a big lot of money had been found, but nobody—unless they themselves gave it away—would be supposing there would be any fresh hunt for the murderer; and maybe if they were quiet and wore gum shoes in their hunt, the fellow would get foolhardy and give himself away. Often happened that way.

The secrecy thus enjoined was guarded so well, that Agatha rather wondered over the apathy of Lee and her grandfather. She supposed the detectives were hunting in Memphis, but it was odd they reported no results; and Mrs. Caldwell shared her wonder. "Perhaps Unk' Ralph feels that it can do no good, *now,* to punish the wretch, since Cousin Ralph's memory is cleared," was Sally Caldwell's conclusion. "Unk' Ralph was always a kind of saint,

but I think such a beast ought to be put off the world somewhere where he can't do any more bloody mischief!" So, tranquilly, the days slipped by, and by degrees Agatha's thoughts left a subject which never was discussed, and turned with deepening perplexity to her own dilemma.

CHAPTER XIV

THE WHITE MAN'S BURDEN

ABOUT this time Henrietta was hearing much anent Sidney Danton. "I can't quite figure out"—thus one letter ran—"why he stays on so. Of course Giles says it is to get money out of me. Well, can you blame him? It is not for himself he wants me to give it; it is for his people. He isn't in the least like that ingenious pillager of the poor, Merlin. So far as I can judge, he is living a perfectly clean, upright life, and honestly eager to help his people. And I believe I owe it to him as much as Giles, that Merlin has paid back that money. I have employed him to collect information as to the social and economical condition of the agricultural negroes. He boards at our cook's."

Again she wrote: "He is quite different to what I thought in his Harvard days. I can't exactly describe how, but I am convinced for one thing that he is not the race apostle that I half believed him. Whether he knows that or not, I do. Yet—can you account for it? I feel more kindly toward his projects than when I deemed his calling

and election sure. He seems to me now, more like an unhappy and bewildered boy.

"He must be lonely as death, poor lad! He has no intercourse with the educated whites; and there is none of his own class among the negroes. I don't wonder that he said once: 'I don't know whether my Harvard course was a blessing or a curse! Sometimes I think if I had gone into a good family and learned to be a chauffeur I'd be happier. All my own race would admire me, and I'd have my own position with the whites. Now, I'm neither fish nor fowl. An educated negro is the loneliest creature on earth.'

"Isn't he? Not only have we taken them away from their country; we have taken their country away from them. How shall they sing the Lord's song in a strange land? They are worse than exiles; we have dispossessed them even of their memories. They have not their own language, their own faith, any vestige of national loyalty and pride. And what is our country to them but the land of the oppressor? Think how it would feel not to belong to Massachusetts or to have a right to be proud of her! Imagine yourself walking the Boston streets, and Park Street churchyard meaning nothing to you! Think of being an alien in the land of your birth, and having no fatherland anywhere else! The negro is the true man without a country!"

When Henrietta responded, a good deal shocked,

in the strain Agatha was conscious she herself would have used to a backslider, Agatha protested, "No, my friend, I am not so sure we are giving things their true values. I am not so certain as I once was that enlightenment is better than happiness. Happiness is a wonderful thing, Henrietta; it carries its own enlightenment itself. It is like sunshine, not like electric light. And there is something so—so *sanitary* about it; it seems to clean away all sorts of morbid germs. Why, I go down-stairs of a morning after staying awake over things that perplex and worry me, not in the least sure what *is* my duty and feeling that it is pretty hard for an elderly spinster to have to grapple with problems too great for great men; I feel old and worn and discouraged; and yet by the time I've had my ten minutes of counsel with Lily Pearl over the meals of the day that good creature's sheer, healthy, sunny cheerfulness has put me in hope and good humor, and I feel 'equal to my task.'

"And now, Henrietta, one thing; you seem to think I ought to treat Danton differently; you say it is no wonder he is unhappy and bewildered when the one he regarded as his kindest friend wants him to eat in her kitchen if he eats in her home, at all.

"But, dear, it isn't my kitchen or my home, both are Giles'. Yes, I insisted that he should let me pay the servants and the expense of the house while I stay here—else I wouldn't stay. I wanted to feel

that I could send Danton some beefsteak or fruit without asking Giles; although any one more generous than he you can't imagine. But all the same it remains his house and his responsibility. Yet don't mistake, Henrietta, there is no oppression here, no sign of peonage. The negro tenant has just the same chance the white tenant has, and that is a very good one. He is 'found' and he gets two-thirds of his crops to pay for the finding at Christmas time. The negro laborer is paid the same dollar a day the white laborer gets. So far I haven't found a sign of discrimination economically. Moreover at Montaigne the negro votes and his votes are counted.

"But socially the line of demarcation is hard and fast and plain everywhere. There is a negro school, a negro church. The poorest white man wouldn't ask the most refined, best educated and wealthiest colored man to his table or his home. And were we to treat poor Danton as I am used to treat him, we shouldn't be mobbed or hurt in any way of person or property, but it would injure Giles in a business way and instead of the warm kindliness shown us on every hand, we should meet distrust and coldness, while it would finish Danton's chance of doing good for all time. So do not blame me if I don't let my conscience run amuck among my kind friends' prejudices."

She returned to the same topic in another letter. "No, Henrietta, I'm not so sure as I used to be that education is the cure of all our evils. At least not

book education. Of course the *right* kind of education is the cure. But what is the right kind of education?

"Is this higher education, which Danton wishes me to give them, the best thing for them? Are they ready for it? Will I not be giving a lure of destruction instead of being the bearer of love and the giver of light as the stock of the Puritan ought to be? Weak and unstable souls are often ambitious. Will not negroes, who might have made good servants, good mechanics or good farmers, become, instead, poor doctors, lawyers and preachers? And when they fail will not their failures harm their race? Henrietta, I am getting scared! You see I know the race so much better than before I came South. Rather oddly, a good deal of this knowledge comes from Danton himself. He does do a lot of good among his own people. He is getting at the every-day temptations of his race and he makes attack right at the citadel of their vices. He has become acquainted with every negro family in a radius of thirty miles. And he has laid their wants before me and been a most judicious and *most* moderate almoner.

"He is not deluded by them the least bit; and which was not so much to be expected, he has not tried to delude me about his race. I know all their ineradicable content with to-day and carelessness about to-morrow. I know that to most of them cleanliness is strictly an outward show; and that they buy underclothes, put them on, wear them out and throw

them away rather than mend or wash them. I know that most of them lie as naïvely and happily as they breathe; and that they have as little remorse for other sins as the beasts that perish. But I also know that if they steal from the general or Giles, it is so little we can't find our loss, and they work for them faithfully, if without hurry, and they are so unmalicious and generous with their little and so willing to deprive themselves to give, and are so kindly to one another—and *so* cheerful! In fine, Henrietta, I have lost a good deal of my faith in the negro, but I have gained an affection for him.

"But don't you see how this more intimate knowledge makes me timid?"

Henrietta became so excited over these surprising views of her friend that she wrote arguments in return twice a week; they had never written each other so often in their lives. "No," wrote Agatha in reply to one burst of eloquence, "no, I can't say that I expect gratitude from Danton. The wrongs which my race has inflicted and is inflicting now on his, are so immeasurable, I haven't the face to expect gratitude for my puny makeshift of restitution. You seem to think that all the oppression of the African must go to the South's account, while we of the North have been benefactors without end. Have we? Are we really as fond of him in a simple, human way as the Southerners? We freed him, you say? Yes, we freed him. Was it for his sake? You *know* it was not; it was a war measure. There were

many who advocated it for the slave's sake, but they could not have prevailed, had there not been that tremendous other argument. We gave him suffrage. I am not so sure that we did not harm him more than help thereby. And we gave it in the main for our own interest—to make a Republican party in the South. Why should that make him grateful? Honestly, I don't think it does, either. The intelligent negroes don't feel love and devotion to the Republican party—or to any of us.

"And all our lavish gifts of money? Well, they (allowing for the inevitable admixture of vanity and vainglory and—the human heart), *they* were born of an honest longing to help uplift the victim of our forebears' sin. They carried good intentions. But have they been more than a tiny bit of leaven? As a people do we do anything save crush him the moment he appears as a competitor? And the North as much as the South.

"The labor unions will have none of him. We use his labor to break strikes, and the strikes once broken, those of him whom the strikers have not killed, are sent about their business, and the old men come back. The negro can farm so long as he doesn't take away the choice land from *us*. But the trades are difficult of entrance to him. And the professions? What white people will employ negro lawyers or doctors or ministers? He has only his own people. And what remuneration can he expect from their poverty?

"We discriminate against him in all sorts of ways North. He is barred from our clubs, our homes (except in a mere touch-and-go fashion), all our intimate relations. The hotels find ingenious excuses when they are not frankly brutal, to refuse him. Yet we keep on assuring him he is really our equal before the law; and fanning his vanity and spurring his ambition—ambition which can never be realized! It seems to me the South which segregates him frankly, which draws a hard and fast line and tells him he can not ever pass it, is fairer than we who only encourage him to his destruction. Really the only thing North that is thrown wide open to the negro is the path to hell. We make him free of all our vice. We have spoiled his humble content and his trust in his 'white folks,' and given him no attainable ambition to put in their place. We did that, we of the North. I begin to fear the negro's soul has been poisoned in the house of his friends."

She struck the same note with a little variation, later, speaking of Danton's morals. "He certainly seems to have high ideals, but how can I tell? A black man can imitate anything; and so well that he believes in it himself. A clever negro will imitate a moral pose as easily as an accent. Danton is an awfully clever negro. The gift of imitation is the most dangerous of gifts for a race; it seems to have accomplished so much more than it has.

"I don't feel as if I knew anything actually and solidly about Sidney Danton. And he is so contra-

dictory. I have never regarded him as a religious man; most of his race are religious by nature, but the coterie of cultivated young colored men to which he belongs are a bit tainted with the prevalent skepticism; they are agnostics, or at the very best pragmatics, rather than devout Christians. He has no religious faith, but if he has any religious *taste* it inclines toward the Church. Yet here he is taking charge (to be sure, as a lay preacher) of a Methodist church; and he preaches the Word. And how do I know that he even believes there is a God while he prays to Him?

"You would hardly believe, Henrietta, how much this suspicion distresses me. You would never imagine, either, where I get my strongest hope for him —from Lily Pearl! She distrusted and was disposed to ridicule him, at first; but she has grown to like and respect him; and if I don't understand the African nature she does. She, Henrietta, is what Montaigne described himself to be, 'an accidental and unpremeditated philosopher.' She is, herself, the gentlest creature with animals I ever saw; but this morning when a little black boy amused himself by prodding a lame dog with a stick in the end of which a nail had been driven, and Tobias, hearing my outcry, had caught the little wretch and was cuffing him well, Lily Pearl rescued him, and gave him a hot cake. I was inclined to resent such lenity to the cruel, but before I could sally forth to rebuke her I saw the boy sharing his cake with the dog, petting him and

evidently apologizing to him. 'Laws, those little tricks, they don't know how bad it hurts!' she said tolerantly. 'When I talked to him about it he was ready to cry himself; dog got most of his cake, I reckon.' It is these things in Lily Pearl make me think of her grandfather, Steven Rutherford, who was so kind to Captain Gardiner. She is a comfort in the house. And yet Lily Pearl's history would not be an ensample to the youths and the maidens.

"Ah, Henrietta, human nature is like these jig-saw puzzles, only it grows more puzzling rather than less the more pieces we fit in. Oh, for the secure, uncomplicated, limited vision of youth!"

CHAPTER XV

BY WAYS THAT NO MAN KNOWS

"Love blows as the wind blows,
In the crowded camp, in the quiet close,
By ways that no man knows,
Love blows into the heart."

"OH, he is cooney, and he had no more principle than a Texas pony; but I'll brand him all right, all right!" said Giles Danforth to Lee Montgomery. She was in the carpenter shop tacking wire on some window screens. She had taken off the collar of her white blouse, for carpenter work is warming, and tucked the fabric into a neat V-shape about her slender throat, which was not tanned like her face, but very white; her long braids, purely in the interest of convenience, were wound about her head. It chanced the fashion was becoming. "The kid is really coming on in looks," thought Giles. Giles sat on the carpenter bench and held the frames in position and tacked in concert. He was speaking of his political rival. Giles was a candidate for the honorable office of county judge, an office requiring in Arkansas sound sense rather than legal training, in fact an office very anal-

ogous to the English justiceship of the peace. Giles wanted it especially in the cause of good roads. His opponent wanted it, so Giles suspected, because he might use it to blackmail the proposed electric road.

The opponent was a local politician of tarnished reputation; an ex-senator of the state legislature, suspected of selling his vote, an ex-sheriff suspected of selling his honor, and a citizen rather more than suspected of stealing ballot-boxes that counted up the wrong way. But he had been a "pore boy," though now he was lavish with his money. He was a big, strong, fearless fellow, always ready to fight, and was what good Uncle Isaac Ross called "a powerful fluid speaker." He used a jovial, Pantagruelian humor which took with the baser sort. There was no denying that he had a formidable following.

"He is ver' pop-u-lar," sighed Lee; "and he says that you are a heartless aristocrat, while he is a pore boy who is one of them. You despise them, he says."

"I know the punk he is handing out," growled Giles. "I'm ready for it, too. The other day I toddled over to Brick's on a made-up errand, hit them just at supper, went in and had a cup of coffee and a bite of corn bread and fried pork—not bad either. Also I selected five clean or cleanish babies and kissed them, just accidental like. I spread them out over as wide an area as possible."

"It is to stoop—that."

"Stoop nothing! That kind of talk is all rot, but

the feeling under it has some sense; these people don't want to be despised any more than we do. Oh, I don't blame them. But that demagogue doesn't care a rap for any of them; *he's* out for the stuff. Now, I mean to haul some of them into the kingdom of heaven and toll others, and so get the job; because then we will have some good roads and a bridge over Stealing Water that will stand the motor-car aunty gave me for Christmas, seven-passenger, six-cylinder! Will you ride in it when I get it?"

"Did you like to kiss the babies?"

"I didn't mind. I incline to kids, clean or dirty. But here; this isn't what I meant to tell you. I've a letter from Miss Vassall."

"At last!"

"She certainly has taken her time," said Giles. Long since he had confided to Lee the surpassing charms of Miss Gladys Vassall. For a while he was forming Lee on this beautiful model. At first, Lee, when she divined this, was humbly pleased; but somehow of late, she had felt such a mean, wicked, indignant kind of feeling. She didn't understand it. Perhaps it came because the idol hadn't written for almost three months, although Lee had sent Miss Vassall some photographs with which Giles had taken unlimited pains, and which she herself had completed in an equally painstaking manner, because Giles was so ill. He worked himself into a fever lest she should not get them right; and when she sent them she had written quite

frankly, with the heart open, and told her how ill Giles was. That was almost three months ago. How often had Lee's throat ached to see the look in Giles' eyes when the mail rider appeared, and the other look that succeeded it before he mustered his cheerful whistle and his smile.

They had talked over all the explanations except the one which was in both their minds, namely, that Miss Gladys had been too busy with other things to bother to write.

But to-day, when the mail rider dumped the bag on the counter and Carrol, the clerk, who was the postmaster, opened it, behold a thin envelope with a foreign stamp! All day Lee had been looking for some word about the letter in that envelope. She shot a swift glance at Giles to read his face. She couldn't decipher its expression. It was not radiant as a lover's should be; neither was it despairing, which it might have equal right to be. It was simply blank, a little tired, a little grave. "Well," he continued, "what do you think of it?" With that he handed over the letter, and Lee read:

"My Dear Giles" (they had gone to the college dances together, and had come to use each other's Christian names)—"I feel most ashamed not to have written before, but I did not get Miss" (then the Miss was crossed out and "your friend's" written —"She forgot my name and lost my letter," thought Lee, who had the rudiments of sophistication)—

"your friend's letter until more than three weeks after it was sent; so I felt pretty sure you were over that hideous fever, especially as mother had a letter from a friend of hers who said your Aunt Agatha had gone to Arkansas and wrote you were doing very well." ("But you hadn't recovered—you might have had a relapse!" Lee cried; and bit her tongue. "That occurred to me, also," said Giles, rather dryly; "typhoid isn't the honestest disease in the world, you know." Lee went back to the letter.) "I felt so very, very sorry for you off in that God-forsaken, desert country with no nice people. ("My thanks," said Lee; conscience-stricken Giles remembered the passage and whistled. "I forgot that was in it," said he. Not regarding him, Lee continued): "And what is so important, no doctor or nurses; but I was sure Miss Danforth would see about that part of it; and I know how brave and cheerful you always are. It will be ancient history by the time this reaches you; and you will be riding about on fiery steeds or shooting wild beasts. When is the bear and panther season with you? Sir Alfred Payne, an Englishman whom we met, and who has come here, says the panther is of the same family as the tiger; he has killed two Royal Bengal tigers. I'm sure you would like him." From this on, the letter rambled off into descriptions, ending rather formally. There was a postscript thanking him for the lovely photographs; they were *"wonderful"* and "so interesting." Then came another postscript: "Do I remember? Yes; a

woman does not forget such things, however opposed to prudence the remembrance may be."

"Well?" said Giles.

"I think she is a false friend," said Lee firmly; *"elle vous donnera le clef de champs;* and I think she means to marry that Englishman. But she—how do you say it?—she wants to have a string tied on you."

She expected him to grow angry, to rise in defense of the perfect one. He did nothing of the kind. Sitting in his corduroys and riding gaiters and flannel shirt, with his slouched hat pushed back off his sunburnt yellow hair; his eyes on the hand holding the hammer with which he pounded unnecessarily hard at a sunken tack, "A poor boy ain't got much chance except with women," he laughed; "that's what a pretty worthless fellow was telling me yesterday. I told him I ought to know about that; I thought most of us poor boys *had* a chance with everything *but* women."

"Do you call yourself a poor boy, Monsieur Giles?"

"Sure I am. Compared to the fellows I know best I'm a beastly poor boy. Everything is comparative. And you know she is all the time being gently persuaded or ridiculed in a nice, well-bred way if she hasn't worldly standards. It's pretty hard for a girl, and what have I to offer? *I* think I shall win out; there's money in lumber still; and the South is going to grow; even Arkansas has to catch the wind in the

sails, soon. But it will be years before I can count for much; and I know that I have mighty little to offer a society girl who likes luxury and who is made for it. Well, I don't grudge it to her, but it isn't nice of a lady neither to take a chap nor to let him wriggle off the hook. One doesn't care just to be a scalp on the goddess' belt, you know."

Lee, with her hands clasped over her knee, was meditating. Her queer, worldly wise look was peering out of her eyes.

"Monsieur Giles, is mademoiselle, your aunt, very, very rich?"

"Yes, Lee, very, very rich."

"And is it that you will be her heir?" When Lee was moved she always slipped into Gallic idioms.

"Good gracious, no. Long ago, she warned me that she intended to leave only a little of her money to her nieces and me. She has philanthropic fads, you know. And she's always been dippy about the colored brother."

"She will change; she has much, what is it? acumen? I think she will make you the heir. Yes. And Miss Vassall wonders that also. How long has she had this great fortune? I hear it is not but a little while."

"It isn't very long."

"And did Miss Vassall know it when—when—"

"When she turned me down? Not she, nor I either, then; but—"

"She knows it now," said Lee with decision, "if

she is not to be Mi-lady Payne she will—maybe—be Mrs. Giles Danforth if he is his aunt's heir. You will see."

"If she waits for that she'll wait for ever," mocked Giles, "for aunty is having other fish to fry. Do you know why Danton is here?"

"It is to visit the old *grandmère,* isn't it? And to build up the church. Monsieur Giles, he speaks with the true eloquence in the most adorable voice in the world; I heard him once, just riding past. It was like a strain of music."

"Oh, he's a wonder, all right. He wants my aunt to found a college for the higher education of negroes, endow it with two or three million; and give him a free hand in the running. Oh, there's nothing small about the eloquent Sidney! My aunt paid his expenses in Harvard. She thinks she is very much attached to him."

"Isn't she?"

"No. My aunt is the most sincere, most rigidly truthful of women. And she hasn't a pose about her. Sidney is always posing, like his race. She hates it, but she is so sorry for him and she admires his real ability so much that she won't admit that he does pose. See?"

"I see. And now she is going to trust him with that awful heap of money?"

"Not if *I* can help it," said Giles grimly. "But here he is, taking charge of the church (he isn't any ordained minister, but how many negro preachers

are?) and he has routed Merlin and persuaded Aunt Agatha to pay all his expenses."

"And how about the people here? Does he do good to them? I hear, yes."

"Oh, they admire him no end; his clothes alone would be enough to carry *them* away. And—there *is* something tremendously taking about him. I've felt it myself. I can't go at him as I ought."

"And he is boarding with Lily Pearl?"

"He is. He lives in luxury for a very moderate sum. Lily Pearl pampers him, every way in the world. She distrusted him, too, at first, but he's won her over."

"I wonder," said Lee, quite simply, "if Lily Pearl won't be *too* nice to him; she can be awfully nice, you know."

"Yes, I know; but he can take care of himself." Giles laughed shortly, "Do you know, I've a nasty notion that that coon has the impudence to be paying attentions to Matilda. My aunt's—ah, companion?"

"Mais non!"

"But yes, Kid. And I miss my guess if she doesn't snub him good and plenty."

"But that is awful; I did not think he was like that!"

"Look at it from his point of view, Kid. We've fooled those colored people up there in Massachusetts and other places with impossible dreams. We insisted to them that negroes are the intellectual equals of white men; that social opportunities as

well as political ought to be given them, we jolly well puffed up their heads; and now they are demanding the things we said they had a right to! You can't blame them so awful much; it is our idiotic piffle that has made the mischief. They can't do the things we can; but they can do a lot of things. Let them do them. Why don't some of these philanthropists found a school to teach servants? *There's* a field that's not overcrowded. The negroes used to be the best servants in the world; now they're the worst. Yet, all the difference is they used to be taught and trained; now they're not. A school like that—hullo, Lily Pearl, what you seeking?"

He wondered, had Lily Pearl overheard his talk. Unperceived she had come to the carpenter shop; she stood quietly, with her usual modest, tranquil smile, in the doorway. She spoke first: "I came to ask you, Mr. Giles, might I make some ham sandwiches and coffee and li'le turnover tarts fo' those men at the meeting, to-morrow. Miss Agatha says she heard tell that Bellingham man gave 'em beer and sandwiches and crackers at his place."

"Certainly, you may. And be sure you pass everything twice to him."

As Lily Pearl departed Giles' eyes met Lee's; they fell, obliquely glancing at the letter from Miss Vassall which lay on the bench. He took it in his hands, his fingers twisting the envelope as if in the act of tearing it up; but instead, he smoothed it out and returned it to his pocket.

"And so you think she would marry me if I had my aunt's fortune in prospect, do you, Kid?"

"Assuredly, yes."

"Poor girl! Poor girl! If she only knew how incorrigibly philanthropic my blessed aunt is. And what a rival I have in the colored brother! And I haven't any show without the fortune, you reckon?"

"Now you make fun of me, Monsieur Giles."

"Not on your life. I think you a wonder for sense; I only just now came to your opinion. Well, you know what Kipling says, 'He rides fastest who rides alone!' Lee, what do *you* think of marriage? Are you 'lowing to get married?"

"No, Monsieur Giles, I think it great foolishness. I shall always take care of my grandfather, and I shall see that the murderer of my father is hanged. That fills my mind."

"Well, Lee, I think we have guessed right about who he is. I'm looking him up steady. We haven't got wind of him yet. But I shall. And you sit tight, Kiddo. Mind you stick to waiting a bit when the young fools come round you. Don't you get like those fashionable, worldly girls. Lee, you remember, don't you, the time you put up your hair and marceled it?"

"And you thought it was ugly and said the cruel words to me to cut it off. *Mais oui.*"

"I didn't think it was ugly; and I didn't mean you to cut it off; it was only slang. I thought it made you look like those snippy buds, like—well, like

Gladys, and I hated to think I was going to lose my comrade."

Lee raised the long dark lashes from her brilliant dark Hungarian eyes; and Giles for the first time looked into them; looked and saw that they were eyes quite unlike the eyes of any girl whom he knew. They had the color of running water under the trees and shadows and wonderful lights in them.

She smiled; her white teeth shone, the deep dimple dented her cheek; she shrugged her shoulders. "No danger; I am just of the country; never do I want to live in the city," said she.

"And you will be my good friend, just like another boy; and we'll tell each other all our secrets."

"That will be most nice. Oh, yes, Monsieur Giles."

"But you'll have to call me Giles."

She considered gravely. "But yes, that is fair," she concluded, "yes, Giles."

She said it in the simplest way in the world; holding out her hand boyishly; there was absolutely no provocation of coquetry; no excuse at all; yet Giles —kissed her.

That is, to be quite accurate, he tried to kiss her, for as he bent his face toward hers, holding her hand, she wrenched the hand away and stepped back. She did not try to run; she faced him with a flashing glance like a drawn sword. "Now," he expostulated, feeling queerly ashamed and thwarted, "why *shouldn't* I kiss you? Boys always kiss each other in

Germany when they swear *brüderschaft.* You're showing a very narrow-minded, prudish, squeamish, unworthy spirit, Lee; and I don't like it a little bit—"

Lee shrugged her shoulders, no whit quelled by this severity; Giles remembered how her lip had quivered and her eyes had filled only six weeks before when he had reproved her; to-day she faced his gaze without flinching; all that she said, in a perfectly even tone was, "Piffle, Monsieur Giles, piffle!"

Giles caught his breath. "I suppose somebody understands girls, but I'm hanged if I do!" he exploded. "I beg your pardon for both times, Kid; and I'll promise to be good and never do—do anything of the sort without your permission—"

"But I could never give it."

"Oh, yes, if I got into a fight with Bellingham and was going to die—"

"Or I was to die. Yes, between good comrades we should wish to say adieu. Yes, that would be right."

"Other times, I will be most sensible; and may I mention that you look ripping, Kid, when you are mad?"

"That is nonsense. Those are things you should say to Miss Vassall—".

Then it was that Giles uttered the blasphemy which his Aunt Agatha, entering the scene, overheard, "Miss Vassall is a quitter; you are worth a dozen of her!"

But Miss Danforth made no sign that she heard; she greeted Lee and Giles in her customary polite, slightly formal manner, adding: "I wish, Giles, you would come over home; that new colored man is making your garden all wrong. I explained to him; but he doesn't seem to understand the way I talk. He says 'yes'm,' and goes on the same way. And he has weeded out all the tulips! Every one of the bulbs are lying on the grass, poor things! I have had him put them back again, but I doubt they will live. And he has hoed up all the mint and all the French chives, he and the two others. One *would* think, living in the country all their lives, they would know the difference between weeds and vegetables and flowers; but they don't seem to have a horticultural idea in their heads; and the third man says he wants to quit, he's *tired*. Altogether it seems time for the boss to get back."

"It sure looks that way," Giles agreed, "especially as one of them feels tired. He's probably done something so awful he's suspecting it himself and getting ready to make a sneak."

So, merely nodding to Lee, Giles walked away with his aunt. Nor did he realize until long after, that there had been a revolution in his own soul; and that Lee's condescending despot had been dethroned.

CHAPTER XVI

THE APPEAL TO CAESAR

WHEN Agatha described the political meeting, which she called *The Appeal to Cæsar,* because that was the title of a clever book written by a son of a Pittsfield citizen, she began by saying, "Beneath the spreading oak the smithy stands." The oak in this case was a willow oak with a round top like the oaks in the landscapes of Jacques and Rousseau and all the Barbizon school. The smithy, itself, was a long, low, weather-grayed building, the roof moss-thatched and crooked; a motley crowd of wrecked vehicles, bits of old iron shoes and ruined parts of machinery strewing the turf between it and the forks of the road.

The blacksmith, who was a man of parts, had converted his forge into a rostrum by the simple device of a few boards and three chairs imported from the store. The chairs were for the chairman of the meeting and the two candidates. He had also constructed benches of sawhorses and boards; and the citizens were to enjoy the infrequent luxury of seats. Since daybreak the countryside had been gathering. Buggies, wagons and horses clustered about the ad-

jacent fences. And one overgrown white boy of the age which the devil is said to love (and statistics rather bear out the assertion) had strolled up to a young pear tree in the open, protected by a fence and a stout rail, and further guarded by the polite stenciled appeal, "Please hitch to rail and not to tree!" Having diligently spelled out the message he sportively spat a stream of tobacco juice on it before he flung his horse's bridle over a swinging limb.

A few moments later, Danton, taking the same way, noticed the horse. He removed the bridle, tying to the rail instead. A raucous voice adjured him: "You nigger, let my horse alone!"

"Your horse was just slipping his bridle and making ready to run off," Danton returned with contemptuous civility. "Besides, there's the notice asking you *not* to tie to the tree. But I dare say you can't read."

"I kin read enuff sight better'n you, you damn nigger. How came you down this way?" the boy retorted furiously, "You're one of them damn high-toned coons from the North, I reckon. You'll get into trouble if you come down we-all's way."

"We don't let a nigger inside *our* town," a man standing near commented. "No, *sir,* not sence we had that row with 'em and they all sot fire to the town. We don't want 'em, nohow. So sassy they'd push white ladies offen the sidewalk, gittin' drunk and hootin' and hollerin' like as they owned the town. No, we driv' 'em out an' they stays out!"

"Yes, sir, when niggers is bad, they sho' is on-b'arable; but I've seen good ones." This came from a wiry little farmer who had improved his presence in a store to buy a curious assortment of tin pails which sparkled about him like a splintered and misplaced aureole.

Testimony to the scattering worth of negroes was borne by a number of men, but it was scouted by the boy; "I ain't no use for niggers nohow. They killed my mother."

"How's that, son?" There was a general motion of heads in the speaker's direction; several of the men stepped aside to make way for his approach; even the urchin perceived that he was accosted by a man of importance. A tall man he was, of uncommon thews and sinews as well as stature, with the dogged strength of mien given by a bulldog jowl, a big Roman nose and a little wrinkle of the brows capping his keen eyes. He did not carry himself well; but his clumsy port seemed rather the effect of indolence than any bodily weakness. He wore the rural politician's state uniform, a soft hat, a new black frock-coat and a stiffly and glossily-starched "boiled shirt," with an impassioned cravat of many hues in which softly glowed a magnificent pink fresh-water pearl. His shoes were of the shiniest patent leather, and his socks "outshone the dawn." The coat being unbuttoned, displayed a heavy gold watch chain. That his coat was dusty and his linen travel-splashed did not mar the wearer's satisfaction in his

toilet any more than it marred his fellow-citizens' admiration.

"That thar's Bellingham," the whisper ran around, reaching the boy. He was too clownish to show deference, but relieved his mouth of its cargo of tobacco at the expense of the whitewashed stove, a novel embarrassment affecting him. He answered the question with repulsive frankness, but it was not so hideous a tale as it well might have been. The lad's mother had come to her death almost under the eyes of two farmers riding in search of wild turkeys. They were armed with guns and rifle. At the time, she was driving her own wagon back from town (it all happened in another part of the state, the boy being a "hill-billy," as the phrase runs), where she had gone to sell her produce. Hence, she had money with her. It is an Arkansas saying that the hill people go to town with full saddle-bags and empty pockets, but come back with empty bags and full pockets; while the bottom-lands men go with full pockets and empty bags, returning with no money, but with their saddle-bags bulging. Therefore it is likely that the big mulatto who stopped the poor creature on the highway intended nothing worse than robbery; but she was a high-tempered woman, as her son admitted ("Maw'd a mighty sharp tongue and she nev' did be feered er nary!") and something in her refusal must have angered the robber, for the horsemen saw him leap on the axle-tree and strike the woman a sickening blow. ("They

all cud hear the thud of hit far's they was.") She tumbled headlong from the wagon seat to the roadside.

By the same impulse both the witnesses fired at the negro. One of them always maintained that his shot (he had the gun) hit the man in the face; if so, the wound was not enough to stop his flight. He shook his head as a dog shakes off water; and plunged over the rocky side of the hill into the woods below. When the men reached the woman she was still alive. To care for her and to catch the horse which ran away took them some little time; that little time was enough to give the slayer his chance of escape. They roused the neighborhood and scoured all the roads, but a small railway station was hard by; a passenger train passed at a possible hour for him to catch it; and he was never seen again.

"That kind of a story," pronounced Bellingham solemnly when it ended, "makes a man feel like niggers had ought to be run out of the country; but I don't guess they will be so long's this Yankee dude has any say 'bout it. They're thick's ticks."

"Well, I know I've got a hankering to kill every nigger I see sence then!" said the boy.

"I don't wonder," sympathized Bellingham solemnly.

"Gentlemen," said a voice so different in cadence and inflection from the others that the spectators turned to stare at the man who spoke. Curiosity

shifted to angry astonishment when they saw Danton mount the steps at the bottom of which he had been standing, and face Bellingham.

"Gentlemen," he said very quietly, "as you can see, I am a negro. It is an awful and pitiful story which has been told; but—" he threw a level gaze at the boy—"if that wicked wretch had been a white man, would you have hated every white man you saw and wanted to kill him?"

"Thar ain't no white men mean 'nuff to do sech a cruel thing!" said the boy sullenly.

"White murderers and fiends of every class are hanged—or escape, for worse crimes, all the time. You don't blame the whole race for their atrocities. Why should our race be held accountable for the misdeeds of a few scoundrels? Gentlemen, give us fair play. You don't want us to be in your country; but God knows we didn't come here of our own accord. For a long, long time we did not stay here of our own accord. Even now the most of us would not know where to go if you turned us out. Don't you think we have the right to ask justice of you instead of persecution? If you treat us all alike, the wretchedly bad among us, and the honest, decent Christian men and women who are trying to live righteous lives, what encouragement have we?"

"That ain't so far out, neither," exclaimed the farmer who was girt with tin, "that nigger's talkin' sense."

"I'll tell you why we take it out on the whole race,

if you want to know so terrible bad," it was Bellingham now, who had listened with a scowl, his hands rammed into his pockets, "I'll give you the truth cold. The white folks, when there is a dastardly crime, turn out and hunt down the criminal, just as you folks in Montaigne helped the Galen folks to catch the man who killed his wife, last year; and the law hanged that man dead and served him right; but ever' las' nigger in the county will holp a nigger criminal to escape, no matter *what* he's done! *You* take the responsibility!"

A loud murmur of approval followed; half submerging Danton's reply: "We recognize there is some justice in your reproach; but don't you see, you yourself foster the conditions which are so hateful and for which you reproach us? Every persecuted race clings together; treat us fairly and we will clear our skirts of such awful crimes."

His earnestness, the beauty of his voice, even through its unfamiliar intonations, affected his hearers. The man of pails nodded his head, some of the others looked thoughtful; Bellingham opened his mouth to interrupt with a gibe, but he had no need, for the boy, awaiting his favorable occasion, at the turning of Danton's head squirted a mouthful of tobacco fairly on his cheek, squealing, "Oh, rats! You put on too much dog!"

The blood flamed up in Danton's dark face; one step he took, his hands clenching; but he stood still, for Giles Danforth bounded past him to seize the lad

in a grip of iron, remarking: "Young man, you need a cuffing to teach you manners—and you'll get it!"

He was giving it liberally between words, soundly boxing the boy's ears. "Manners, young ruffian," continued Giles in a very pleasant, gentle tone, "are invaluable. Also good habits. You're too young to use tobacco in any form! Are you sorry or shall I give you a nice, salutary spanking to make you so? Ah—*bite* will you? Now, you *will* get a thrashing!"

"Aw, take one of your size," sneered Bellingham, "let the boy go. Shame!"

"The boy," said Giles, "needs a lesson in manners; don't you interfere with the work of grace! I'll attend to *you*, later."

Bellingham would have attacked Giles without more ado, had not three stalwart men stepped in between. Giles, meanwhile, having his hunting-crop in hand, was laying it on the ordained seat of discipline with such good will that the boy was squirming, wailing and protesting at the top of his voice, that he hadn't done a thing. "If you haven't, then don't you do it again!" commanded Giles, "get out, now, you filthy little mucker!"

As the boy fled, weeping with rage and fright, he could hear Giles calling for a basin of water and soap to wash his hands. Bellingham had thrown aside the three big men who would have withheld him from his quarry as easily as if they had been children; but

when he would have rushed at Giles a mild voice spoke, even as a long, thin, aged hand was laid on his shoulder: "Pray, let us have no scuffling, sir—until after the meeting."

Bellingham was sufficiently careless of public opinion; but he could not fell General Montgomery to the floor; neither could he get to Giles unless he did this. Moreover, the *casus belli* had vanished from the scene. He swallowed his anger; and even assumed an air of humor; as one who retires gracefully out of respect to age, saying, "*You* can stop me better'n all those three fellers did, General, I'm at yo' service, sir."

"Thank you, sir, thank you," the general answered and his imperious hospitality forced him into an invitation to step around to his house, where "I have prepared a mint julep, sir, to supplement my young friend's generous refreshments."

Bellingham was willing to imbibe mint juleps at any time. And he did not carry his resentment against Giles to the point of lunching on sardines and biscuits at the store rather than accepting gumbo and tomato chowder of fresh fish, tarts, hot rolls and jam, with Lily Pearl's root beer and coffee.

He insisted afterward that he supposed the collation to have been provided by General Montgomery, wherefore he gave free scope to a noble appetite.

When the meeting began, he was so inspirited by these viands (making no account of the mint julep)

that he attacked Giles with an unprecedented rancor and abandon, describing him as a Yankee dude who took two baths a day in a white porcelain *sepulcher* that he called a bath-tub, and who wore colored silk pants—he hadn't quite the nerve to wear them daytimes, but he put them on every night. An opportunity offering here for a coarse insinuation, the speaker availed himself of it to its limit, being rewarded by loud laughter from his own partisans and sly grins even from Giles' side of the house, for the Anglo-Saxon has always loved a broad joke. This Yankee swell, who wanted to get a good salary from them, was so dainty about his eating that he couldn't find good enough truck at Galen or in Arkansas, even in Little Rock; he had to send away to Boston for his groceries—but at this point the high pipe of the man of pails arose, accompanied by unintentional clashings as of cymbals when he bumped the pails in moving; "I don't guess," says he, "that nary one of us present has got just cause to fault Mist' Danforth's eatin'. Jedging from the samples he done give us to-day, it is all right!"

"Sure is!" bellowed Brick; "and Joe Bellingham sampled it all right and plenty!"

The hoarse guffaw from Giles' party was swelled by the other side now; but such rude give and take of debate was Bellingham's accustomed meat; he turned it to his own account by explaining that he thought he was partaking of General Montgomery's hospitality, "that fine old southern gentleman of the

old school, whom we all respect and honor." Then with fresh zest he fell upon Giles, who, he said, was so fastidious he couldn't so much as eat a meal with a plain citizen that worked for his living; was there anybody of "all you deluded fellers who are aimin' to vote for a Yankee shark to eat up your hard earnings at the public crib who'd ever so much as had him inside your house for a meal?"

Brick's stentorian shout was unexpected. "Yes, me; I had him last week, and he et right hearty, too!"

"Anybody would who had such good stuff before him!" shouted Giles, "if I cleaned you out, old chap, blame your wife's good cooking."

This appealed to another genuine Anglo-Saxon trait; every married man there held it his duty to believe in his wife's gifts of cookery; and there was a tolerant chuckle.

"Well, I'll bet you're the only one," retorted Bellingham, "I didn't know he wanted the office bad's that," he confided to his audience with a grimace. He won their laughter, but he made Brick Johnson his bitter foe from that moment. "But I can tell you, if my lord is too elegant to associate with us he ain't too fine for niggers' company; they're his side partners here. He was almost, not quite, going to fight me because a pore boy sassed a nigger a little.

"I was once a pore boy myself, gentlemen; I earned my first pair of shoes picking cotton, and

mighty proud I was of 'em; and my Lord! but wasn't they oncomfortable to wear! But I ain't going to forgit I *was* a pore boy; and my heart goes out to every pore, struggling, young boy. But, naturally, Mr. Danforth, whose dear mummer never let him go barefoot in his life, and who don't know what it means to go swimming except in a bath-tub, naturally *he* ain't got no sech feelings, and when this pore boy whose mother had been murdered by a nigger, misses his aim when he's spitting, and hits an elegant coon who is Mr. Danforth's Harvard classmate and his side partner here, why Mr. Danforth sees his show of displaying his muscle where there ain't a bit of danger and jumps on the little kid and misuses him and three of his minions jump on me when I sail in to stop it. Well, I reckon some of you saw how much they stopped *me!* General Montgomery stopped me when he raised his feeble voice and touched me with his trembling, aged hand that had fought and bled for the sunny South, God bless her!

"Why, gentlemen, fellow-citizens of Perry County and the grand old state of Arkansas, I jest stood back; I let my hand drop; he was safe behind the egis of that venerable form!" With profuse gesticulation, flinging out his arms and bending almost as if he would scoop up the earth of the smithy floor, talking in the loud tremolo dedicated by certain orators to the noblest and most pathetic emotions, Bellingham quite entranced his own following; while

on the countenances of Giles' supporters was painted a haughty contempt; and the man of pails whispered (quite audibly) to Brick Johnson: "Say, wouldn't the old man jest bust hisself if he ben here; how come he ain't?"

"Dunno," said Brick, making no pretext of an aside, "reckon he'd call him down if he was. *He* ain't no aged applicant for pensions; I call the general a mighty peart old party. An' if he's howlin' down aristocrats, how come he don't fall on *him?* Laws! ain't he r'arin' an' chargin' *now!* Say, that ain't no langwidge to use 'bout any woman, I don't care what her color. What's his need to haul Lily Pearl Rutherford into this, onyhow? Kind and amiable? course she is, and never grudged her time to holp ary suff'ring critter; to drag up her for actin' like a nigger is no fair. You cayn't jedge niggers like white folks nohow. And as for what—oh, quit, Joe Bellingham! I ain't squeamish, but you're the limit!"

"Order!" called another man; and the chairman said mildly, "I reckon, Mist' Bellingham, even if ladies ain't present, you're putting it pretty strong. 'Tain't parliamentary language."

Giles had sat with his hands on his knees and his face sternly impassive, but his tanned skin grew darkly scarlet, then pale, and the hands clenched hard, while Bellingham flung one atrocious jest after another at Lily Pearl's past and one vile innuendo after another at Giles, ending by swinging round

squarely on the young man and shaking his great, dingy forefinger at him.

"Now, sir," he bellowed, "I promised I would expose your pretentions to the citizens of Perry County and I have kept my word. I rather guess you wish now you'd let me got at you and made this meeting impossible. And in parting I tell you and the snobs and aristocrats like you that an honest Arkansas farmer is as good as you and far too smart to be fooled by you, if you did graduate from Harvard College. But—you've got a chance to try."

The chairman announced to his fellow-citizens that they would now hear from Mr. Danforth, the other candidate for county judge, subject to the approval of the Democratic county convention.

When Giles arose Bellingham chuckled with delight; he had promised to "skin the silk-stockinged hypocrite alive and make him squirm," and he felt that he had kept his word.

Giles drew a type-written paper out of his pocket. "Fellow-citizens," said he, his distinct, clear-cut enunciation and his controlled manner in marked contrast to the other's exuberant gestures and resonant voice; "Fellow-citizens, I have prepared a speech on the condition of our roads and what position I should take about them, were I to be elected." He paused; deliberately, slowly, he tore the type-written sheets into pieces. "I don't intend to deliver it. You like the kind of personalities which you have been hearing. Very well, you shall get them. Mr.

Bellingham is a person who has been charged with so many crimes and misdemeanors that no one is likely to disturb him by showing him up. I don't suppose it would much hurt him, either, with you. Perhaps you don't care for them. But I think you are enough of men to despise a liar and a coward and a defamer of defenseless women. Mr. Bellingham is all three of these. He says he is as good as I. He is a liar. I will not say anything about birth or breeding or education—his lack there is merely his misfortune. But he is not so good a man. There are plenty of fellows here better than I and a whole lot as good; but Joseph Bellingham isn't. I keep my word when I give it, as every man here who knows me knows; he broke his to Johnny Rilpey when he promised to give him a splendid colt for his counting the votes his way, when he ran for sheriff, and then backed out because poor Johnny couldn't count enough to sneak him in. He lies and throws mud because he thinks other men are like him. I don't. He says he can lick me. I'm going to give him a chance to try; and I engage here and now in your presence to withdraw my name, if, in case he is defeated, he will withdraw his. And I will fight him any way he likes on these conditions.

"Now, Joseph Bellingham, you're a liar; are you a coward, too?"

"Make him promise not to bite, then!" called a voice from the crowd.

"He can bite all he likes, he can hit anywhere he

likes, he can do anything he likes with his feet. If he can get at that revolver of his or that bowie-knife he carries up his sleeve or those knucks he is so clever with, he may use any or all of them; but—if he does, he is liable to get killed right here. Well, Mr. Bellingham, what do you say?"

Bellingham had risen; his teeth bared as his lips parted from them in a sinister grin. Yet in his eye there was a gleam emanating from some baleful misgiving back in some circumvolution of his lower brain that behind such amazing effrontery of a weaker man must be some detestable trap! But his prestige was at stake; a mob of followers was present who had intended all kinds of jeering interruptions to Giles' speech; it had taken them all so by surprise that they simply sat, their mouths agape, waiting to hear the next amazing sentence! These men must be shown he was too powerful for such insulting.

He drew back; and the chairman began: "Gentlemen," when a voice hailed him. "Mr. Chairman, I rise to a question of privilege."

The man who rose was Sidney Danton. "Mr. Chairman and gentlemen," said he, "I am a Democratic voter in Massachusetts. I voted for Bryan at the last election. Although I am not a citizen of Arkansas, nor entitled to cast a vote, I trust you will let me say just one sentence, namely, that everything said in regard to Mr. Danforth's position toward my people is a mistake, with absolutely no founda-

tion of fact. Mr. Danforth has never been fair or especially friendly to my race, but he has not taken advantage of his position to do any man or any colored woman a wrong; and if he did try such a thing it would be bitterly resented. The kind and generous-hearted woman who suggested the refreshments of which we have all partaken with so much pleasure, and who worked so hard and so willingly to enable you to have them, deserves better treatment."

"That she does—and she'll git it, tew, don't you forgit it," sang out Brick blithely, "that was all hot air. *Look out,* Giles!"

Many times afterward the old general gave the account. "I got to the door just in time to hear Giles' speech. I saw they were going to do something more than talk at each other; Giles' tone had a fight to a finish in it; I know the boy, sir; I tried to get to the platform, sir; but my word! it was all over before I was half way. He had been trained in that Japanese business, sir; and he got some infernal sleight-of-hand trick and simply hurtled the fellow over the platform into a lot of scrap which ought to have been cleared away; but there is so much to do on a plantation that things will get neglected. Yes, sir, he broke his arm, sir, his right arm. He hauled Bellingham up himself; and said, 'Will you try any more?' The man stood there grinding his teeth with rage, but speechless for fear. 'I've got to quit,' says he, 'you broke my arm, damn you!'

'Of course,' says Giles, 'I warned you not to pull your knife. Some gentleman kindly pick that knife up? thank you,' says Giles. 'Have you got enough, or do you want me to break your back just as I broke your arm? I can,' says he. Bellingham admitted he was beaten.

"Then he skulked off and somebody helped him on his horse and they say he cursed shamefully; but he was born poor white trash and it couldn't be expected that he should act like a gentleman."

But while Bellingham was riding home with a few friends in a humor to shame the devil, Brick Johnson turned to his next friend and muttered, "I had to laff the way Giles done him up; it was *tew* slick! The cuss tried to bite, all right; but he got a biff on the jaw that broke it nigh, I reckon. But for all that, I tell you, Giles'll have to kill that yeller dog yet."

Then he set up a call for "Danforth" and demanded information about the roads, and Danforth gave it in a much less formal and more illuminating manner than the painstaking manuscript would have allowed him to give, with the result that Bellingham's crowd joined in the cheers. And the meeting harmoniously adjourned to take a smoke and a stirrup cup of cool, sweet cider.

CHAPTER XVII

"WHAT ANSWER?"

GILES extricated himself with difficulty from the enthusiasm of his adherents whom he left crowding the store piazza, still going over the most exciting political meeting the little hamlet had ever known.

Although he knew that he had changed good natured approval and half-amused toleration into that downright admiration which the American only gives to fearlessness, he was but half way pleased with himself. He wondered what his aunt would find to row him about. What was to be expected from law and orderly New England if the kid could show so little enthusiasm and think he oughtn't to have fought that whelp just because the meeting happened to be at his home? Now that was ridiculous. He had half expected Lee to fall into his arms and hug him. Well, maybe not that, but once she would have jumped for joy at the chance to see such a fight. He knew she saw it because he had caught a glimpse of her little eager face and shining eyes at the gable window of the store. He suspected the truth that Lee, whose grandfather and aunt didn't approve of

her going to the store when it was full of men, had obtained permission to run over for some purchase while the meeting was taking every one away; had run up-stairs for a better view of the crowd and the opportunity of catching stray bits of particularly loud eloquence; and had got a much larger measure of excitement than she expected. Giles went straight for the stairs and caught her before she could escape. But where was the delight and the praises which he expected from his chum? He couldn't know that Lee was so long in getting down-stairs because she had felt sick with fear during the fight, so sick that she sat down on the first step to get back her breath and her color. Lee wasn't used to feeling frightened; it was a sickening sensation. "If I don't stop him, somehow," says Lee desperately, "he will be fighting all the time; he is of a courage so *terrible!* Nearly he did get shot the day the money was found—only there wasn't any assassin to shoot him."

Not knowing all this, Giles felt mortified and disappointed. There was no use talking, Lee was getting to know too much! He wished nice kids would stay kids! In the stress of his peevishness, he walked fast and recklessly and stumbled on the roots of a tree, thereby nearly falling over Sidney Danton. The dark man sat under a great elm spreading magnificent branches above the greenish brown water. His head was sunk on his breast and a profound melancholy lined every feature. Giles would have

retired unperceived had it been in his power, but the other looked up startled. Then the young white man advanced. He held out his hand. "I want to thank you," said he, "Danton, you are a gentleman."

Danton's smile was bitter. "You are most kind," said he, "but to be a gentleman and a nigger, too, is a pretty awful proposition."

"It's—damn," said Giles.

"It is," said Danton. "But I will not keep you here. You would better not be seen in my company."

"Piffle," said Giles, seating himself, "if you'll let me, there are a few things I want mightily to say to you."

"Yes? I confess things look pretty murky to me just now. I wonder if you'd mind my saying a few things first to you?"

"Not a bit; delighted. Take a cigar and light up." He proffered his case.

"I'll light up afterward if you want to have me," said Danton. "You know, of course, I am down here first and foremost to influence your aunt to give me the endowment for a college, a university for the higher education of my race."

"Yes, I know; and I reckon *you* know that I can't stand for it and shall do all in my power to prevent my aunt flinging away her money in that fashion. But you're a gentleman and a man of honor, all right, if you do want to pull off an impossibility."

"You mean it is impossible that Miss Danforth

should ever consent to trust me with so much money?"

"No; I can't say about that. My aunt has lots of sense, but she's been educated to believe that the negro ought to be elevated, and that the American people have a mission to elevate him. Liberty-enlightening-the-world stunt, you understand, and all that sort of thing. No, what I think impossible is that such a university should help your people or do anything but harm."

"And why?"

"Because you are getting all the higher education your heads can stand now. You don't need it. You need to be instructed in the fundamental things of life; how to be clean and moral and honest and acquire property, and stick to your job."

"I see, be model serfs and lower classes in whom have not been injected any disorderly germs of aspiration or idealism, who will order themselves lowly and reverently toward all their betters, like Uncle Isaac."

"Uncle Isaac Ross is a mighty good man, mighty good citizen," said Giles, "but don't get giddy, Danton; I know there are others. Only I put it to you bluntly; for whatever punk there may be on the subject, I know and you know that intellectually you are a cleverer man than I."

"It pleases you to make—"

"Now you're off again; I never saw such a tindery lot as you are."

"Is it surprising?"

"No," admitted Giles, with a touch of sympathy in his tone, "no, under the circumstances I don't see how it can be helped. You are up against an *impasse;* and there's no soothing syrup in that situation. But now, honestly—this is what I was coming to—do you think it will conduce to the happiness and the moral uplift of the African race to increase the number of educated malcontents?"

"I think they will increase anyhow, Mr. Danforth. There is only one solution of this terrible problem, only one way to prevent the blind Sampson in his despair from pulling down the pillars of the temple; that is, follow the counsel of Holy Writ; cease trying to keep us among you but not of you, an alien race that can banish the consciousness of its misery only by sinking into brutishness; be just to us; let us have the same civil, and so far as our education and our conduct and our ability may merit it, the same social rights and privileges. You will win our loyalty and gratitude; and we are the gratefulest, the loyalest of people."

"You mean, I suppose, let you ride in our cars, come to our hotels, enter our clubs and our homes —marry our women. Frankly, that *is* what you mean, isn't it?"

"Frankly, yes."

"It can't be done. There is one bar you haven't admitted; nature forbids it."

Danton lifted up to him his own face and turned

so that his delicate Caucasian profile was silhouetted against the paling blue sky above the bank.

"Nature's prohibition appears to have been disregarded in the past," said he with indescribable, controlled scorn.

"We're always disobeying Nature and—getting jolly well spanked for it," said Giles coolly; "but the old girl always comes out ahead. There have been some high-toned chivalrous southern gentlemen with whom I trust the Lord has had a reckoning before now, about you, Danton; those old brutes have given you their ambition and their high-headed, high-handed notions; and you can make us a whole big lot of trouble. The sins of the fathers—Jove, there's never an end of them, they seem to trundle down the generations like a ball of pitch gathering weight as it rolls.

"But one thing you will have to admit: your grandfather's white grandson couldn't wrong a colored girl with the impunity your grandfather did. That sort of thing which decent, high-minded, though a bit daffy women, like Harriet Stowe and Anna Dickenson could advocate thirty or forty years ago, we couldn't stand for to-day. I read Anna Dickenson's *What Answer* the other day; and, the same day, a little story by Margaret Deland, which was absolutely gripping, it was so simple and tremendous. It had the same subject: the love of a white man for a girl of color, but so white he doesn't guess it; but in Miss Dickenson's case, when the

man discovers, he goes on, persists and marries her; in the other, the minute he knows, his love simply dies of fright. Well, I reckon the two stories show our two stages of feeling. Some of the abolitionists were worked up to such a frenzy that they went the limit—and then some; but the pendulum has swung back, we have come to realize that Uncle Toms are mighty scarce and that freedom hasn't made a man and a brother out of the negro; it has only made him a more vicious, less contented child! And we know now that a lot of apparent progress isn't rooted; it is just imitation. You know better than I, Danton, how these your colored coons *pretend!*"

"There are some who do not pretend; there is Booker Washington, there is Professor DuBois, there is Turner the artist, there was his father, Bishop Turner, and Frederick Douglass and Paul Dunbar; I could name a large company."

"I am sure you could," admitted Giles, "but there are ten million of you and you know the proportion is small; and the general average of the negro character is not high enough to stand competition with other races. You know the brutal scientific facts that the negro skull is open like any white skull until the child reaches a certain age; then it does not, like the white skull, retain a certain elasticity; it becomes ossified, stiff as iron; and that means something; it means the why a negro child up to a certain age is brighter and more precocious than most white children; after that he lags, he falls behind; he has

reached his possible, as the French say. And the slower white child passes him.

"I knew a poor fellow out west; I went to the public schools, and there was no discrimination at all there. This boy was such a wonder; he could learn so rapidly that some people became interested, and when he finished the grammar school they raised money to support him through the high school instead of letting his father make a blacksmith of him. There it came out what some of the boys had dimly suspected, that his prestige came from his remarkable power to learn by rote; but when he tried to commit his geometry to memory, instead of reasoning out the theorems, and the teacher found it out and changed the letters of the diagrams on the blackboard, he came an awful cropper. Pretty soon we all got on to it; he couldn't reason; he could only remember and imitate. The poor chap got first discouraged and then desperate; finally he ran away from home rather than be humiliated by constantly failing at school. I don't know what became of him; but once here in Arkansas, as the train I was on went slowly past a cut where they had a convict gang I heard one of them singing a little song this poor chap used to sing—he had a beautiful voice—in so exactly his way; and the man looked so like him that it gave me a turn. I couldn't stop to find out, for we were moving and we were gone in a minute; but I think he caught the dollar I chucked him and he grinned up at me."

"But there are plenty of negroes who do pass high schools, and in a creditable manner. Statistics show that our race has *thousands* of college graduates. You went to prep school, I dare say, with some colored boys. I know you went to Harvard with some. I think that is rather puerile reasoning, Mr. Danforth."

"There was only one full-blooded negro who went to school with me," said Giles musingly, "he was a magnificent foot-ball player, and we simply hauled him through his course to keep him on the team. He was an awfully good fellow, straight as a string and played clean foot-ball every time; he was black, but there was no yellow streak in *him*. He was a wonder for strength. And so good-natured. But there is no maintaining that he was clever. The others were mulattoes or quadroons; they were not nearly so popular as he, and I don't think they were so clean; but they passed all right, and, except that one was expelled for general vicious living and gambling, they were all graduated. I can't say that they changed my views."

"Still you admit that intellectually they were equal to the average of their white companions?"

"Oh, academically, yes; but they hadn't the staying power of the white; they weren't so steady; they were a bit hysterical and swayed by their emotions. One of them was mighty clever with the mandolin and later with the violin; and he used to compose the weirdest things which he called Dreams of the

Jungle. If he hadn't taken to cocaine and morphine after he left school he might have done something striking. But all those fellows of mixed race have a devil of an uphill job, with all the evil tendencies of black and white against them. And—this is the real reason that the white race will not amalgamate with them; the drop of ink colors the whole cup! There is a queer sort of persistence in the African blood; it throws back, as the gardeners say; a mulatto mother and a quadroon father may have a family of all shades of skin from nearly white to actual black." Giles saw that something in his last sentence had moved Danton, for a curious change came into his face; had he been a white man Giles would have said that he changed color, but there was no change in his bitter smile.

"I'm not mincing words," Giles went on; afterward he told his aunt that he had a sensation analogous to that which he had felt when he once, as a child, cut a frog's leg off with a lawn mower; he caught up a hatchet near by and put the silent, maimed creature out of its pain with his eyes and teeth shut tight, raining blows.

"I'm not mincing words," said Giles, "you're a man; and you can take the truth and grin and bear it; you've got to. So long as there is the possibility that the African strain will revert, there will be a growing and not a lessening repulsion to amalgamation. Why, it's visible on every side. The other day I read in the papers of a man who discovered

that the woman whom he had married as a white woman had a mere trace of African blood. They had a son; she was a very beautiful woman, whom he had passionately loved. He killed her and killed himself; that was the only way out he could see."

"Why didn't he kill the son, too?" said Danton.

"Even illegal alliances are shocking to men now," continued Giles; and his face, now in this tacit duel, wore a strained look as well as the other's, "the possibilities are too appalling. They ought to be punished by law. And as to women—"

"A refined, cultivated white lady married Frederick Douglass," said Danton steadily.

"Yes; and became an outcast. She was shunned by her own race and resented and misunderstood by her husband's."

"I have heard very differently. She mourned Douglass truly; she believed him a great man."

"Appears to be a matter of contradicting testimony and no available umpire," Giles remarked coolly. "But anyhow you will concede that the marriage is not admitted to be a success, and that the almost universal feeling of the white women is aversion to such alliances."

"Yet I have heard charity workers in Boston, ladies, say, not in approval, but with visible consternation, that there was, as they expressed it, 'an appalling number of marriages between colored men and white girls.'"

"Not American girls?"

"No, I think not; Italian and Irish, I gathered, mainly; but white girls."

"White girls not over here long enough to understand what they would be up against. But you take a decent, well-brought-up American white girl, say like my aunt's companion, she would never *consider* marrying a leader of the African race, even for a moment."

Giles was looking at the river; he did not turn his eyes even when the reply came. "It seems to me a leader is a leader and should be so treated whatever his race; you know that when the old Queen Kali—what's-her-name of the Sandwich Islands—came to Queen Victoria's jubilee she insisted on her right of royal precedence, and her carriage preceded the carriages of white dukes and duchesses, the proudest lineage of England and the continent. She was a dark woman, but she was a queen. They gave her the homage she demanded."

"Well, to a certain extent I think they were right and we are wrong; but there's no getting over the fact that we are determined to keep the races for ever apart, and we erect unnecessary and tyrannical and cruel barriers rather than run any risk by another and more generous course. We don't *dare!*"

"Other Anglo-Saxons are less timid. The English in Jamaica, for instance."

"Unluckily for that argument I've been in Jamaica. You're right about there not being the same repulsion. And queerly enough in Bermuda they

keep them at arm's length but are just and fair to them as we ought to be. But just look at the result! The Jamaican is a rotten lot, lazy, lying, good for nothing on earth; not to be compared with our colored people. But the Bermuda negroes are a *fine* lot; we could take lessons from Bermuda."

"Your conclusion, then, for the colored man is to surrender, to make no more fight; be the underling, the bearer of burdens and the meek recipient of his master's broken victuals and cast-off clothes?" Danton rose; he looked at Giles, who had not moved. "Do you people realize what it is to slam the door of hope in a race's face? May I tell you a little bit about myself?"

"Yes, tell me; I'd like to know you better, Danton," said Giles in a tone that was so friendly Danton stared.

"I was in Boston," said he. "When I was a little lad my father used to take me to see Bunker Hill monument. You never saw a more rabid little American and patriot than I was at that time. My father died when I was ten. I only remember him dimly as walking about and telling me stories, while I clung to one big finger and felt monstrous important, for my father was waiter in a big hotel, which then seemed to me a grand position. My father was nearly white, lighter than my mother, although she was of mixed race also. She was the best, the honestest, and the most unselfish woman in the world. I had one brother who was fifteen when my father

died. He—he is very much darker than I. He went to work at once in a family as an errand boy. He got his board and a little money every week, which he scrupulously brought home. *He* is the kind of man of color that all the white people like—but why should I rail? He is as good a man as you'll ever meet and more successful maybe than I in his own way.

"But I was the one of whom my mother was proud; she was determined to educate me. My father had his life insured and we were never desperately poor; for our class, we were in good circumstances. My mother was a skilled laundress and she worked incessantly and—oh, so cheerfully; it—it *hurts* me to remember how hard and how willingly she worked while I was only busy with my books. But sometimes my brother roused me and we both helped her; *he* helped her always. Just before I entered Harvard she died. Until I was eleven or so I had no particular realization of the curse that is on my race. I knew in a general way that I belonged to a despised people; but I thought that it was only mean, bad people who were cruel to colored boys; that good people like the president and Mrs. Stowe and Mrs. Julia Ward Howe were always kind to them and helped them. I loved good white people.

"At the public school which I attended one of the boys in the highest grade confirmed me in this opinion. He was a leader in the sports, and he had beautiful curly blond hair. I can't tell you how passion-

ately I worshiped that young hero! Maybe you had a hero when you were a boy"—Giles grinned and nodded—"then you know; and when one day this great being interfered with two little bullies who were trying to take my new slate away from me and cuffed them both well, sending them whimpering off, you can fancy how I felt. Naturally, I made a nuisance of myself, tagging in his wake whenever I could, shrilly rooting for him at the school games, and bragging about 'my friend' and what he would do to certain small Irish tormentors of mine, although he never more than nodded to me afterward. I dare say he was plagued by this obtrusive worship; but I didn't think of that then. And one day I coaxed my mother to let me pick every flower in the garden and we made together very carefully a funny, flaring big nosegay; and I carried it to school and marched with it up to my hero, who was talking to some of the girls in the school-yard, with a little fringe of boys behind, and presented it. 'This,' said I, 'is an offering of gratitude to my dear friend'—you see I didn't know any speeches except out of books—and more rot like that. The boys began to laugh and the girls to giggle, and my boy grew red as a peony and pushed my nosegay aside and told me I was too fresh and he was no friend of mine; the nosegay tumbled on the ground and the boys began throwing it around, making the kind of jokes that pass for wit with boys of that age.

"I—do you know, it hurts even now to tell it—I

felt as if a hot iron had seared my soul; I burst into tears and jumped at my hero like a cornered rat. I hit him full; and he caught me and held me, squirming and kicking and weeping and shrieking, helplessly at arm's length. 'I don't fight niggers any more than I'm friends with them,' said he; and flung me off. I turned and ran home as fast as my legs could carry me, the tears streaming down my cheeks; and I remember I made funny little whining, whimpering noises like a hurt puppy, and I didn't stop until I burst in on my mother and flung myself on her breast, blubbering, 'Oh, mamma, *am* I a nigger? *Am* I a nigger?' She comforted me; and she did not make me go back to that school."

"Aren't boys fiends!" growled Giles, "but that was too damned cruel. Your hero must have been a low down mucker."

"He wasn't. That was the trouble. He was just as fine as I thought him. Years later, I met him at Harvard. He was in the law school while I was a freshman, and while I saw very little of him, I later discovered that he had done me substantial kindnesses. Once he made me a very handsome apology for that boyish brutality. His father was a prominent politician of the party opposed to us and he was taunted with deserting his father's faith. I don't blame him so much. That's just where the searing pain was; that he *was* such a fine fellow; that I could never hope to have a friend who would return my affection in any but my grand-

mother's race. I don't say my race, for what race do I have? And I soon found that no matter how kind white fellows might be to me, it was always the patron, never the friend; and—they used to call my grandfather the proudest man in Fairfax County, Maryland! Embittered? How can I help being embittered? Ungrateful? Of course I'm ungrateful. There never yet was a man with a man's and not a dog's heart in his bosom who was grateful for charity! It's not money—man, your race can't *give* us enough money to pay for the wrong which you have done us!—it's not money that awakens gratitude; it's not even kindness; it's human sympathy. You find it hard, sometimes, to be grateful to your benefactor, but you can't help being grateful to your friend.

"For instance, your aunt is my benefactress. She is not my friend. I never had a white friend, only white benefactors."

Giles scrambled to his feet; he stuck his hands into his pockets; his brows and lips puckered. He had a baffled look; he was, in fact, at a loss how to blend his convictions with a growing compassion.

"Old chap," said he, "you're too bally sentimental. Take a smoke"—his cigarette case came out—"and get a pipe dream of that university you are going to wheedle out of my aunt in spite of me!"

"I'm not so sure," returned Danton in a serener tone, accepting the cigarette and a match; and Giles did not know that to be addressed in the phrase of an

equal, almost an intimate, had taken half the sting out of his opposition with the sensitive nature that he opposed.

For himself, he stood looking at the other in graver thought than he had ever known. "There must be a way out," he was puzzling, "but—we've got to offer these fellows something instead—oh, *say!* Why not?" He smiled his gay, confident, masterful smile; "I guess it!" he cried. "It's in one word."

"It must be a hoodoo word then," Danton observed in a tone of such indulgence as a man may use to a clever child, "what is your wonderful word?"

"Cuba," said Giles.

"Cuba? Kindly explain how Cuba will save my people—and yours. For you can't degrade and destroy a race and not pay."

"I don't understand why some one hasn't been writing magazine articles on it. Probably some one has, but I haven't seen them. See, Danton, those beggars there aren't going to behave for long; *they don't know how.* They don't know how to do anything but revolute. That's their trade. They'll be a screaming nuisance again inside five years. We'll have to take over their rotten bailiwick, though we don't want it a little bit. See? Well, when we do, why not send all of you people who want to rise and do things and are not satisfied—I don't blame you, mind—with things over here, to Cuba instead of

Liberia? Never allow a white *emigrant* to gain citizenship; gradually work through the provincial period when you can be a territory and have a white government, up to the entire possession of the governing power by colored men. They have so many unholy blends over there that they haven't a bit of prejudice; all you need is a good and great friend to back you up. You'll have it. You'll have our flag. But you'll have your own government. It will take time, heaps and heaps of time. What is it your poet Dunbar says?

" 'Slow moves the pageant of a climbing race.'

"But at least you will have something ahead of you. There will be a chance for African ambition. We can do there what might have been done after the war. We can gradually guide your people into peace and prosperity and independence. As the boys down here holler when they are tugging at the derrick, lifting big loads, 'What do you sa-ay?' "

"More rope," responded Danton in the spirit of the metaphor. "Do you reckon that if ever we should make Cuba worth taking the white Americans wouldn't take it away from us?"

"Well, it sounds sanguine, I admit, in view of our record in spots," said Giles good-humoredly. "But, Danton, I tell you underneath, way underneath, we are *not* greedy, we are *not* cruel, though we have been both and have seemed both often when we

weren't. Underneath we white Americans have a sense of right; it was roused during the Civil War, though it was so mixed up with passion and prejudice it foozled a heap; and Theodore Roosevelt did a whole lot more than conserve our national resources and help peace and draw a dead line for pirate trusts; he roused our moral sense. I believe there are enough decent, level-headed men in this country to protect you folks both from the exploiters and promoters and land seekers on one hand and your fool friends on the other. And what's more, if that kind of scheme is on deck and my aunt wants to help with a few millions I won't stand in the way; but say the best word I can. Can I speak fairer than that?"

"I don't deny you mean fair, Giles Danforth," said Danton, "but the scheme seems to me as impossible as Liberia."

"Oh, you think it over," persisted Giles, "maybe it'll strike you differently. Anyhow you understand I mean it as a friend, not any other way."

As Giles walked away his thoughts dwelt on the future black state with considerable self approval and his cheerful whistle of Fair Harvard pursued Danton all the dark man's homeward path. His bitter curve of the lips softened for a second, but instantly his face returned to its somber sternness. "We ask for bread," he muttered, "and they would give us dead dog!"

CHAPTER XVIII

THE REAL SIDNEY DANTON

MISS DANFORTH was in her chamber making ready to go to hear Danton preach at the colored church. There was no official church in Montaigne. The Methodist circuit-rider, who ministered to a scanty and scattered flock, came to the school-house one Sunday in the month; the other Sundays, after Sunday-school, the general repeated the service of his own church; and Mrs. Phil played on a mouse-eaten little organ, while the Sunday-school children sang hymns. Sometimes, after service, the general gave a simple talk on the happenings of the week. The entire service scarcely kept the listeners through an hour. But the Sunday-school, which preceded it, took another hour; thus Agatha had the feeling of a properly spent Sunday morning. To be honest, she had the feeling more when the circuit-rider did not come; for on those Sundays the general was merely a devout and dignified auditor, never smiling, however startling might be the young preacher's views or pronunciation.

Agatha loved the unaffected piety and the uncon-

scious wisdom of the old soldier. The Methodist minister was young and crude and zealous, and, unhappily, he had a reputation for eloquence (to Agatha a mystery) in which he believed. With some relief, therefore, on this particular Sunday, she heard Giles propose that they all go to hear Sidney Danton instead of Brother Mucklewrath. Mrs. Phil, with more animation than usual, said that she would like to hear "an eloquent address even by a colored man not in orders." Lee was eager to go. Only the general hesitated for fear the circuit-rider might miss them in his small congregation. But the general had been much edified of late by Giles' regular attendance on Sundays. Instead of being kept away by sleep or belated business three Sundays out of four, Giles now appeared every Sunday and sang with Lee in the improvised choir. He was not much of a singer, but he was invaluable as the keeper of order among the big boys.

To-day, therefore, the general was anxious to reward such exemplary conduct by giving Giles any remission in his power and when the young fellow assured him that half the mill was going to hear the minister, and Agatha added her conviction that they would not be missed, he willingly promised to come back after Sunday-school and take Agatha and Mrs. Phil to the colored church. "Giles is planning to show Lee how easy his new buggy goes," said he, "we'll let them follow.

As Agatha moved about her chamber, she could

see Uncle Isaac over in the Montgomery back yard, putting the horses in the "hack." ("A hack, here, Henrietta," she had explained long ago, "isn't one of those shabby four-wheelers like those which haunt the station at Pittsfield, it is simply a stout, open wagon, fit for these muddy roads.") The Montgomery hack was a venerable vehicle, which had lost every trace of its original paint through too strenuous washings; but which had been neatly, although rather lugubriously painted solid black, by Lee.

As Uncle Isaac put his finishing touches to the equipage, Mrs. Phil came out for a parting word to Aunt Rebecca the cook. Aunt Rebecca's dark head with its fluttering red knots of turban and the flashing white of her voluminous apron were in bold relief against the yellow house walls.

Agatha stood a moment, gazing out over the March landscape. She thought how peaceful, how fair was the scene. Across the hedge-rows the Montgomerys' old-fashioned garden was lovely with blooms. The forsythias, the pink and scarlet Pevis Japonicas, the flowering almonds glowed with a soft brilliance; and the cameo pink of the peach orchard was painted deliciously against an azure sky with low-floating smoke-white clouds. Clover and the early grass made splashes of vivid green amid the silvery browns of the Bermuda grass along the lawn. The trees were not in foliage, but veiled in gray, through which, however, shone exquisite

gradations of green, faint tints of violet and mauve and yellow and rich scarlet and crimson tones in the willows fringing the friendly little river.

From all this budding vegetation rose odors fresh, mysterious and penetrating which had their subtle part in the charm of the spring. And Lily Pearl, instructing Tobias how to pick ducks in a new fashion, her white turban and white apron shining against the red woodshed walls, added a touch of human interest. Tobias' mournful accents floated to Miss Danforth: "Why, 'taint *decent* not to scalt 'em!"

Lily Pearl surveyed him with a languid, tolerant, hopeless smile. "Tobias, you nev' will be a epicure," she pronounced, "you'd lose all the flavor. But what you've never noticed I don't guess you'd ever miss. What the mind don't know the heart can't grieve, as the saying is."

"Well, I knows one t'ing I'd miss bad; an' dat ar's you if you was to go off."

"Now, Tobias, quit your funning," said Lily Pearl entirely composed, "you know I aim to live a righteous life"—her lips parted in a wide, infectious smile—"and here are you, a married man, talking nonsense to me."

'Lily Pearl, I are able and willin' to git a divorce from Lucy; 'twon't only cos' twenty-five dollars—"

But Lily Pearl interrupted him; "Now, I 'preciate that awfully, Brother Montgomery; but how 'bout your *other* wife?"

"Oh, we-all done parted, long ago," urged Tobias, nowise abashed, "and she got a divorce from me."

"I don't feel assured on that point, Brother Montgomery, I don't feel any leanings to matrimony, either. So let us be sensible and friendly. Ain't that *your* whistle, Tobias?"

She stood still smiling after he left. "Well," she murmured aloud, "men, as Lucille says, does be pintedly cu'ris!" With that easy grace which never left her, she leaned on the fence a moment, then she picked up the bird and very deftly finished Tobias' uncompleted task. The picture which she made Agatha was artist enough to appreciate.

"She *is* a winsome baggage," thought Agatha, smiling and sighing in a breath.

"Not going to church, this morning, Mrs. Rutherford?" a voice called. Agatha recognized the voice before she saw Sidney Danton in his correct Cambridge Sunday morning attire, his black frock-coat neatly buttoned, and his silk hat in his hand. He stepped out of the screen of the woodshed, which had hidden his approach along the foot-path to Lily Pearl's cabin, and stood, fitting his gloves on his hands while he watched her. There was a subtle frankness of intimacy in his accent which Agatha had never heard before. Suddenly it came over her that here was her opportunity to see the real Sidney Danton.

"Yes, sir," replied Lily Pearl, "but I'll have to be

a little late. Keep back the sermon, won't you, Pastor, 'til I get there?"

"I'll try," said he, smiling, "see here, can't I help you? I've five minutes; you know that horse is fast."

"It's Mr. Giles' second bes' horse he lends you; of course, it's fast. No, sir, I don't need help; and Tobe will be back in a minute. This is his job."

"Does he do it so poorly that you have to help him out?"

"Looks like. Tobe isn't much at picking, that's truth; skinning is *his* specialty."

"So I should infer. And he's something on love-making, too."

"And you heard him, did you?" she laughed. Lily Pearl's laugh recalled Shelley's *Skylark*.

"What objects are the fountains
Of thy happy strain?
What fields or waves or mountains?
What shapes of sky or plain?
What love of thine own kind? What ignorance of pain?

Yet if we could scorn
Hate or pride or fear,
If we were things born,
Not to shed a tear,
I know not how thy joy we ever should come near."

Danton joined in the laugh, but not heartily.

"I'm afraid you're rather a heartless charmer, Sister Rutherford," said he, "making poor Tobe so

wild over you he wants to divorce his wife and then flouting the poor fellow."

"Well, I was only laughing at the comical creatures men are. Now, Toby, he don't no mo' *really* want me than nothing at all, but Lucy has left him and he's lonesome, so he just takes up with *me*. But once let Lucy return and swear she'll never have no mo' to do with that Merlin and all you'll see of Tobias will be his coat tails a-flyin' to her! He won't know I'm in the world."

"No man who has met you can *stop* knowing you are in the world," said Danton. He said it in a tone strange to Agatha, a tone which made her feel that she had no right to listen, she ought to turn away—but she didn't.

"Now *you* make fun of me," said Lily Pearl lightly as ever. "I know who you're making up to, Mr. Danton; and I know mo'n that. But I reckon you will have to find out for yourself and sup sorrow out of your own cup; but I nev' did crave to be told pretty things that was meant fo' some other woman who didn't want to hear them. But they don't mad me; I reckon men persons have to practise somehow; so I let them ease their minds talking; but I tell you the man that comes to make real love to me will have to fetch along a wedding-ring fo' me to show my chile. I don't say I'll take him; but I listen to him politely as I know how. But I don't waste my time harking to the others."

"Did they always fetch wedding-rings, Mrs.

Rutherford?" said Danton. He was stung a little by her first words.

Agatha flushed with anger at his brutality. She hoped Lily Pearl would resent it sharply. When Lily Pearl was silent her indignation mounted; the poor creature was too hurt to speak; how outrageous of him! How cruel! No doubt she was fighting with her sobs. Then the single thing which she had not imagined, happened. There came a giggle from Lily Pearl. It was no hysterical smothering of a sob; it was a plain giggle.

"Laws! laws!" said Lily Pearl, "ain't it miraculous men persons are so much alike. Now, I'd have said there didn't be the leas' resemblance between you and Lafe Meadowes, and yet, just let me speak open and honest about some foolishness he had on his mind and he'd get peevish precisely like you just now! But all the same I'm going give you a teenty bit of advice and tell you one little fact. First, for the fact: you don't care the least bit in the worl' for that nice white gyurl; it's all ambition; next for the advice: when you name it to her, *don't* you name it, put it in some fancy way like it didn't be you.

"No, sir; you've no call to get mad at me. I have been watching you mighty close. I know you are living a righteous life, nobody can fault you. But did you always? Have *you* always felt you had to give a wedding-ring when you taken a fancy to the looks of a gyurl? Me, neither. But my mother

raised me to be a lady. I never betrayed any man nor woman. I never cheated or pretended. I was true till we pyarted. And I'm better'n most the fine ladies that change their husbands a heap mo'n I changed mine, because I never did pyart because I had another man picked out; I waited, hoping I'd meet up with some one I'd like to stay with for keeps. I didn't find him. I don' expect it no mo'. And I don' mind. I married Lafe a heap mo' to oblige him than me; and it was the same way, always; and now I got my little 'Toinette; that satisfies *me*. I'm going to raise her a heap different from the way I been raised. And she ain't evah going to be able to remember her mother behaving any way but seemly and righteous, the way she's going to behave, herself. And if I hadn't ought to speak so frank like to you, this way, you have to excuse me and tell me; and I don't do so any mo'."

Danton's somber eyes shone. "Lily Pearl Rutherford, you're worth the whole rotten outfit," he cried, "and can't *you* understand? I've my own conscience. I'm in earnest trying to help you colored people, to help *us!* I do live a clean, honest life. I'm no whited sepulcher like that unspeakable Stowe Merlin. My ambition is not for myself, it's for my race. Every open lawful marriage of that sort helps to break down the barrier. It's the quickest way out of our bondage. Don't you see?"

"Mist' Danton, I see some things you don't, simply because your eyes are sealed by your dreams.

That way out, the whites will kill us, rather'n let us try! They'll turn us all out of the country; you folks'll bring black trouble on us, bloodshed and misery. You will fo' sure, if you go on. And what's mo' "—Lily Pearl's voice, which had rung with a fuller, deeper note than Agatha had ever heard it, sweetened again with laughter—"we-all doan' really hone ayfter white folks, we like our own folks a heap better for staying with steady. Being with white folks is like always walking on tiptoe; and that's no way to work, all day!"

If Lily Pearl's arguments, which went with a queer directness to her unseen auditor, did not affect Danton, the music of a wonderful voice and the indescribable personal charm of the speaker made amends.

"Lily," he cried, "before God, I'd give up *everything* for you, you are the only—"

"Now, you stop right off short, Mist' Danton," said Lily Pearl with decision. "I ain't asking sacrifices from no man. You go on, you find out for you'self the way w'ite folks feel. But—don't you ask her to marry you before you find out."

"I don't want any woman but you in the world, Lily," he cried, "and I want you. Great Heaven, how I want you!"

Agatha, frightened at his tone and the passion in his face, recoiled; she almost left her coign of observation, not quite, for even as she rose she per-

ceived that Lily Pearl held the situation well in hand.

"Well, cheer up, you cayn't have me," she retorted with entire lack of emotion, "and it's lucky for you I feel that way. Now, I'm obliged to bid you good morning, for these ducks have to be stuffed before I go to church and Miss Agatha gave me one for you, and some olives for the stuffing. So excuse me, please, Preacher; and *you* had ought to be going to church."

He gave a short laugh and lifted his hat. "I see now, Lily Rutherford, why you will always be able to make us male creatures do just as you please. I beg your pardon. Good-by."

He strode away at a great pace. Her eyes followed him; and it seemed to Agatha that something dawned in her face as different from its usual serenity as had been that strange look in Danton's. She smiled, she shook her head, in a minute she laughed. The laugh was a comfort to Agatha; but the New England woman resumed her preparations for church in a sorely buffeted frame of mind.

The last she heard of Lily Pearl she was singing:

"Jestice settin' on de sprangles of de sun!
Jestice done plumb de line.
Hypocrite, hypocrite I despise;
Wings is craptid, can not rise;
Jestice done plumb de line."

CHAPTER XIX

THE COLORED CHURCH

THE bare white church with its brilliant green blinds and wide leaden-colored door stood on the side of a hill sloping into the forest. No broidery of flowering shrubs or gracious mask of vines relieved its glaring plainness. Some litter of the carpenters' last work in the shape of yellow shavings and white chips was spattered over the greensward; apparently one child had discarded its old shoes; and three cows and four swine acted in place of lawn mowers. Wagons in all stages of mud and decrepitude, drawn by surprisingly good mules and horses, had been coming since the sun was well above the horizon. These were tethered among the trees; amid them stood the riding horses. No carriages showed until Giles Danforth's smart Stanhope was swung around the road, closely followed by the general's carefully washed but unmistakably shabby "hack."

When the "quality" entered the room it was nearly filled. Agatha looked over the people with a moving of the heart. Their humble finery seemed to her the groping of a sense of beauty which had never a

chance to express itself. Not a creature there but was wearing its best, however poor that best might be. When Sidney came to the platform and stood behind the table, which was the only approach to a pulpit, his patron looked at him with new eyes. It was as if she saw the conditions about him as he did, realizing the hard change from what his youth had known; and guessing what an awakening to harder facts this all must mean. She confessed to herself that he was bearing it better than she would have credited.

"My friends," said Danton quietly, "as you all know, I am not an ordained minister; I am not like our friend, General Montgomery, who holds an appointment as lay reader; I am not even a member of your church; I am only one of your own race whom you are willing, because he has had a wider opportunity and experience in life and because he loves you, to have talk to you every Sunday about the things of the spirit.

"Because I have no commission as your pastor and because I am not a member of the Baptist communion I have never felt warranted in leading you in prayer. Only silently have we all joined together in our individual prayers. Therefore, this morning, after singing the three hundred and twentieth hymn in the red books, *Jesus, Lover of My Soul,* I shall call on Brother Isaac Ross to lead us in prayer."

"I may have wronged him," thought Agatha re-

morsefully; "any one who believes in righteousness might go as far as that."

The hymn rose and fell, infused with the sensuous melancholy of African voices.

They sang with the negro abandon, but not with deep emotion. They were waiting for "de pastor" to stir them. "One waits with pleasing anticipations for one's dram of emotion," Giles whispered in his labored Harvard French to Lee, who gave him his second glance of censure. *"Ce n'est qu'un église qu'ils ont, ce n'est pas le place pour faire rire!"* she reproved.

And Giles' aunt, who had quick ears and had caught both persiflage and reproof, admired to see Giles, erstwhile so carelessly superior to the kid's feelings, look visibly dashed.

With the last strains of the hymn, Uncle Isaac rose, a long, lean, gray negro, with a mild and pleasant face. In a soft, conversational tone he prayed that the good Lord would help them all to appreciate their advantages and to lead a heap better lives. "I'se 'specially partickler, Lord, 'bout dem better lives," said he; "I wants to see dis church house plumb paid fo', and we-uns not laying down on de generous w'ite folks, but humpin' ourseffs! And I want it to mean suthin' dat we 'long t' dis church; I want it to mean truer and righteouser lives, no pickin's and stealin's of vittels or co'n or torrer men's wives. And oh, Lord, bless yo' servant, our brudder, who has come thousands of miles to

preach to us and let de light shine on us." In this manner, with good sense, as well as manifest devotion, the old man made his prayer. Again the congregation sang, this time with more warmth; and there were scattered "Amens," or "Help, Lord!" or "Send power!"

Then another brother, without invitation, rose and lifted a musical, thrilling voice in a wail for light, for help under their tribulations. And loud cries of response rose. The new man's words were quite on another key than Uncle Isaac's homely prayer. Magnetic chords in the voice stirred his hearers' pulses. They began to move in their seats. The scattering ejaculations grew louder. They were prolonged like moans. "Who is he?" whispered Agatha to the general. But she thought that she knew.

"He is a natural orator and a grand rascal," the general wrote on his cuff. "It's Lafe Meadowes; used to be Lily Pearl's husband. He seems to have come back."

"Oh," said Agatha. Giles, on her right, was looking at the speaker through lowered eyelids. Lee, on her left, watched him with somber attention. "There's Lily Pearl over yonder, near the door," whispered Mrs. Phil. "I wonder, did *she* expect to see him?" If she did not she made no sign. Danton, however, looked both surprised and annoyed. He half rose from his chair as if to interrupt the speaker, but thought better of it; and listened with a

grave and undecipherable attention. The instant the prayer ended, Danton was on his feet. He announced another hymn, a simple song favored by evangelists, in the easily captured melody of which all the congregation joined. Agatha heard the blind man at her side singing in a tenor still sweet and firm. He bent his gray head reverently as Danton rose to ask all his hearers to join for a moment in silent prayer for all people of all races in need, sickness or any affliction. "And, my brethren, will you all pray that grace may be given to *me,* your present pastor and friend, to guide me aright in what I may say to you?"

An easily moved people, quickly sensitive to emotional impulses, the congregation was hushed solemnly. Agatha saw the man, Lafe Meadowes, lift his wide nostrils, at the same time dropping his long eyelashes. His eyes were like the flashing of a knife under their fringe. He stood up, his lips parted, but before he could speak, Danton's voice penetrated the silence, announcing his text:

"These things hast thou done, and I held my tongue, and thou thoughtest wickedly that I am even such an one as thyself; but I will reprove thee and set before thee the things that thou hast done."

He spoke without notes, slowly, it seemed with diffidence. His theme at first appeared no more than the commonplace one that there could be no escape from the Supreme witness. But insensibly one di-

vined a deeper vision of the human heart. "It is not only God who sees you, whose judgment you can not escape at the last, *you* see *yourself!* Scientific men have discovered that in one part of the brain there is recorded everything that we have ever experienced, everything heard or seen or felt—*all there.* It's an awful thought. Not only do you see, you write it down, an indestructible record. Some day, while the wretched wicked soul of you shrivels and shrieks under the terrible light, you will have to read it. Thus the Lord 'will set before thee the things that thou hast done.'" He pursued the theme with a simple picturesqueness of phrase born of his recent study of the lives about him, through their every-day temptations. He appealed to their tenderness, to their spiritual hope, to their race patriotism, and last he struck swift and sure down to the roots of fear that are in the African, fear formless, murky, out of human ken, but of terrible power. "Some men of you may say," he cried, "'Come, this fellow is just fooling us; God is too busy to be looking after *me,* every minute.' He may not be too busy, we can not fathom omnipotence; but He does not need to watch you; *you* are the witnesses; you carry the testimony there in your souls—yes, brothers, move about the seats and scuffle with your feet, but you can't stop the testimony with noise; for it is written!"

The man, Lafe Meadowes, folded his arms and was rigidly still. Giles and Lee watched him in-

tently, it seemed to Agatha, with something out of the common in their interest.

"Every sin is written on your heart; and some day, *some day* you will have to read that writing—you will have to remember! No whisky will dull your memory then! No laughing and shooting over the craps will drown it. No brutal pleasure will push it away! No prayers even will avail. For in that day, O my brothers and my sisters, we shall have to see ourselves as we *are!* It will be our lives and our sins that we shall see, not our mourning or our shouting. Riches and worldly honor and the praise of men will all go even as the smoke of a fire goes into the air and is lost. But the record within us will never depart. May God have mercy on us all in that day!"

There was nothing but solemn appeal in his voice; no slightest attempt to rouse his hearers' emotions. But as if the last word had been a signal gun, Lafe Meadowes leaped to his feet. His voice soared in the high-keyed, long-dawn-out negro wail that scrapes the nerves. "Oh-h, Lord! Oh-h, Lord! *Hear!* I'm a sinner; I repents; I lays it on de altar! I *feels* de glory comin'!"

Two or three sisters felt it also, and flung themselves on the floor, screaming at the top of their voices. The congregation began to sing. The words were nothing, so far as Agatha could gather from the blurr of unfamiliar dialect. They described Ziney (or Zion), who didn't mourn as she used to

mourn, and the Lord was implored to arouse her. But the melody had the plaintive, throbbing African cadences, and it moved the people in a remarkable degree.

Half a dozen men and women were on their feet, a spiritual spasm convulsed the audience. But Uncle Isaac looked troubled; and the young preacher's mouth set itself sharply.

"My brothers and my sisters," said he; and his quiet, silvery clear tones hushed the uproar of testimony and praise with a strange suddenness; "God sees you now; He knows whether this comes from a humble resolve henceforth to obey Him or simply because you are excited and want to hoiler. My brothers and sisters, let us pray in silence for strength to do right. In absolute silence." Again the new method wrought with them. Meadowes himself, between whom and the preacher this strange and wordless duel was waging, stopped groaning; his courage hung fire. And the tide turned. In a moment the preacher pronounced the benediction and dismissed the congregation.

There was nothing left for the mourners who had thrown themselves on the floor but to get up and dust off their clothes as best they might. Uncle Isaac approached the preacher and spoke earnestly with him, apart. Danton nodded, saying little. Lafe Meadowes had left the house. So had Lily Pearl.

Agatha went up to Danton to praise his sermon. He thanked her, but there was a weary note in his

voice and the hand which wiped his damp brow shook a little. Only once did his tired face lighten; then it was at the general's frank word of commendation.

Agatha, who was behind the general when he strode as firmly as any man to his carriage, saw Lafe Meadowes waiting at the horses' heads. She heard him ask the general: "I don't guess you 'member me, Gineral?"

The general's tone was dry: "Oh, yes; I remember you perfectly, Meadowes. You were Lily Pearl Rutherford's husband."

"Yes'r; and I don't guess she nor you got much good of me to 'member dat-a-way; but mebbe you 'member how I shoed dat ar Rollins colt fo' you and how I mended dat b'iler."

"You were a sure 'nuff good blacksmith, Lafe, that's the fact," admitted the general in a milder voice.

"Yes'r. I hears how you-all doan' habe nare blacksmith an' you seekin'."

"Well, not exactly; we have several applicants, Lafe."

"Kin I be one'r dem, sah?"

"Why, you can apply, anybody can apply; but you haven't much chance."

"Yes'r, t'ank you, sah."

Touching his hat politely to the group, Meadowes stepped aside.

"Is he so good a blacksmith?" Agatha had the

curiosity to ask, later in the day; and the general replied, "I reckon we never had so good a one in these pyarts, white or black. But he's a brute; and I won't have him stirring up Lily Pearl."

Had they but known that was precisely his occupation at this speaking. He had gone straight to Lily Pearl's house. He found her alone with the little Antoinette, by some misadventure, her grandmother having "gone visiting." She was laying the cloth for Danton's luncheon. Usually he went to see his grandmother Sunday; but this day he had elected to go over to Mr. Danforth's in the afternoon for a business talk with Miss Agatha, he said; and any cold luncheon would do him. The cold luncheon, being a pork pie and a vegetable salad, and hot coffee, looked very appetizing to Lafe, who said as much frankly.

Lily Pearl turned round and spoke with equal frankness, "Is that you, Lafe? Didn't I tell you it didn't be healthy fo' you heah?"

"Huh! I ain't done nuffin'; I'se gwine jine de chu'ch; I'se a monah fo' sho'! Lily Pearl, I do feel terrible I done you so mean."

Lily Pearl made no audible reply; she was hunting for a box; she found one, although she must needs dislodge a pair of shoes to obtain it; and decking it with a garish paper napkin, laid a bounteous cold repast within, to which she added a delectable piece of lemon pie, and would have put the finishing touch in a bottle of beer, had he not stopped her;

"I ain't drinking no mo', Lily Pearl; I done ben convertid."

"Hmm!" grunted Lily Pearl without conviction; but she substituted some hot coffee well creamed and sweetened.

"You ain't fixin' to have me set down in a cheer long side'r you, lak we-all used ter done?"

"No, I ain't," said Lily Pearl.

He looked at her with a touch of wistfulness in his bold face; he sighed. "Yo' terrible onforgiveful, Lily Pearl," said he, as he put out his hand for the coffee. He drained the cup and took up the box.

"I'd like mighty well to have a little talk with you, Lily Pearl," pleaded he. "I done spoke to de gineral, and mebbe I'll git de blacksmith shop agin, and if—"

She broke in on his words sharply, with something like horror in her voice: "*You—you* spoke to the general? *You* fixing to come here?"

"And why not, Lily Pearl?"

She did not catch his ferocious gleam of suspicion because she was soothing Antoinette, who was clinging to her skirts and whimpering: "'Toinette didn't be naughty; don't let bad man cayar' 'Toinette way!"

"'Cause it ain't safe for you here. You ought to know that much," said she.

When she glanced up, holding the child in her arms, he was looking at her sadly. "I didn't do a thing, Lily Pearl; 'tain't right when a man's aimin'

to reform and lead a puffick life, an's a monah, to tromple on him lak he's a wil' hawg! Hit mos' destroy de grace of God in de soul to git treated dat-away!"

"I wish you well, Lafe; I hope you'll come through, but you bes' light out f'om heah, fo' you know that kind o' talk won't wash with Mr. Giles. And yon he comes with preacher!"

The man saw that she was speaking the truth; he flung a savage glance on the distant figures. "I'll go since you want me to, honey," said he in a tone so gentle that it was a strange contrast to his lowering brows and miserable, angry eyes. "I'll go, but I kain't forgit you, nohow; nor stop a wantin' of you! If you knowed how I suffers you mabbe wudn't be so hard-hearted, Lily Pearl!"

Awaiting no answer, he strode out of the cabin and went swiftly down the road. "But he didn't forgit his box, I notice," muttered Lily Pearl; "ain't that Lafe all over?"

CHAPTER XX

LILY PEARL'S ADVICE

MARCH had mellowed into April. The tulips which the overzealous gardeners had spared were a jewel-like mass of colors; the flowering trees glowed delicately, the maple with its flame-like, tongue-shaped blooms, the persimmon splendid in vermilion, crab-apple trees with clusters of rose, hickory trees and oaks tipped in red and pink velvet, wild plums in the forest, apple trees in the orchard—all were part of that enchanting moment of promise which every year knows and to which the heart never fails to respond.

The beauty of the season was not silent, but filled with song. Everywhere the birds rejoiced. Not only were the forest paths thrilled with melody, the garden held myriads of singing tenants. Orioles plaited their filmy nests on the high elm boughs. The buoyant recitative of the cat-bird rippled from syringa bushes, and the flutes of the thrushes vibrated in the low shrubs; wrens, meadow-larks and phœbes were caroling all the day, and when night fell softly the mocking-bird lifted his plaintive strain, and the cardinal chanted almost with antiphonal effect. In

the rose trees and vines of the veranda dwelt a multitude of cheery, friendly little junkoes; and it is recorded in the traditions of Montaigne that the only time "Miss Agatha didn't talk natchell" was when Tobias came to her gleefully bearing a shovelful of tiny, limp, gray bodies which he had shot for English sparrows.

Afar in the deep woods, down at the edge of the black pools the white-legged crane might be standing on one foot awaiting his prey, and the nighthawk might fly, and where a wounded rabbit had crawled to die, or some dead beast had been hauled and left, the buzzards might be circling; but at her sunny window Agatha Danforth could see none of this under side of nature, on this bright April morning. She looked about her with delight. There was nothing grandiose in this landscape, nothing to make a beholder catch his breath with awe or rapture; but everywhere, fresh hues, graceful details, everywhere a sweet, intimate, homely beauty.

So Agatha thought while her eye wandered from the tenderly molded white clouds, escaping by infinitesimal threads of palest gray into the blue, down to the sparkle of the river and the varied green shades of the forest foliage; then back to the garden and the fields. The plows were out in the furrows, and freshly turned earth displayed moist, rich tints, purples, black and gray in agreeable relief against the green pastures where the cows were grazing. A white horse, sturdily built as one of Wouverman's,

romped clumsily, kicking his heels, and a brown horse was dozing, flat on the sward. The sunshine flecked the green expanse. It lay in broad masses on the turf of the side yard where Matilda sat on the rustic bench crocheting, a very pretty placid picture like a sketch in water color, with her white gown and shining fair hair and light blue ribbons.

Agatha looked on her with the pensive pleasure that approaching age finds in youth. The older woman sat in her window nook whence she could see far, herself unseen. Many things of domestic import had come to the watcher at the window, small insignificant happenings and bits of talk which were tempting to a seeker after the truth, never sought, but too tempting to be shunned. Nevertheless, a vigilant conscience would sometimes harry her for an eavesdropper.

This moment, beholding Sidney Danton approach, particularly handsome in his blue and white shirt, with its accompanying cravat and his white duck trousers turned up at the bottoms to reveal the brilliant blue socks which linked them to his new tan shoes, conscience plied the lash with vigor. "You have no right to spy on these people!" says Conscience. But for once Agatha did not cringe; she needed particularly to comprehend the workings of Danton's mind; there was an enormous amount at stake; she must know before she decided about the university; why should she go away?

Conscience (sternly): "Then you would do evil

that good may come? Nice one you to reprobate the Jesuits!"

Agatha: "It is always a question in morality which is the greater wrong. I am afraid about the university; I am afraid about Danton; I can't help him with my eyes shut; be quiet and let me listen and hear what he is saying to Matilda."

Danton was continuing a conversation already begun; he had a volume in his hand; Agatha knew its outward semblance; it was Du Bois' *The Souls of Black Folk.* She had read it more than once. Sidney had talked about it to her, for Du Bois was the patron saint of a little group of colored students at Harvard; she had heard the same praises of it which he was reciting, before. But she had not heard their conclusion: "This copy came to me," he said in his gentle, violin-like voice, informed now with an unconscious quality of pathos, "from the man I cared for most, a young colored lawyer, very enthusiastic, very brilliant, my roommate at college. He wrote me a note telling me he was going to send it to me—before he killed himself."

"Mercy me!" gasped Matilda at the unexpected shock of the ending; "what did he do *that* for?"

Danton had flung himself on the bench beside her —but at a distance—he was not looking at her; his eyes were on the book in his hand, open at a well-read place; neither he nor she observed a horseman passing along the road who reined in his horse to stare at them. But the lady at the window knew the

big man in gray with a white sling over his bridle arm for Joseph Bellingham.

Danton spoke so low that Agatha could barely distinguish his words. They could not have been audible at all to Bellingham. "He did it because he was in love with a white girl, and she scorned him."

"But how could he *dare?*" cried Matilda; "it was awful for her to have him do it; and I suppose she felt bad; but—he couldn't *expect* her to marry him. Was she a decent girl?"

"Very decent; she was a librarian, highly educated; she supported her mother, and was sending her brother through Harvard. He left this brother all his little property. I thought it delicate, leaving it to the boy; *she* wouldn't have liked to take it, you know."

"I shouldn't think *he* would either. And I don't think she was very nice—no decent girl that has any respect for herself would allow a colored man to be hanging about her and courting her! Why, the idea is *awful!*" Her voice rang sharply.

"I dare say it looks that way to you," said Danton, with his twisted smile of irony, which gave way to a kindlier look; "and I rather think you are right; I knew a colored young lady, quite as well educated, who might have made poor Louis very, very happy. But he was tremendously ambitious; and he had an intense temperament; he found life too flat for living, he said. He wrote me, 'They have taken away our country, our natural life, our simple primitive

longings and contentment; and now that we have outgrown these things, they deny us their life, their pleasures, their ideals, their ambitions. Here's where I get off.' "

"It don't sound to me like he was quite right in his mind," Matilda argued. Her voice had sunk again.

"Maybe; he was a genius," said Danton moodily. The shadow on his forehead cleared a little as he rose. "After all, you may be right; the two races may be best apart; but what are we educated, cultivated negroes to do? The whites will have none of us. And what fellowship have we with such as these?"

He waved a contemptuous hand at Lafe Meadowes, who was the center of a hilarious group on the lane, in a farm wagon, which at this moment passed Bellingham, their shouts and laughter rending the quiet twilight air. Matilda shot a glance roadward. "I guess you haven't any; but there are lots of nice colored people in Massachusetts;" she consoled him; "and there's some nice ones here, though they are not overly educated. Uncle Isaac and his wife—"

"They're pure gold," he cried.

"And so's Lily Pearl Rutherford; I declare I wish she'd come back with us and open a cooking school in Pittsfield. And there's no use their telling me scandalous things about her; I don't believe a word; she's as nice and modest and tidy as anybody

could possibly be; and she's as sensible as a white woman!"

"She's a good woman," said Danton.

"The man that gets her will be lucky," pronounced Matilda with emphasis.

"He will be; she'll make him happy whatever his ambitions; and—don't you think, Miss Matilda, that she has a nature capable of growth and expansion, and—and—and a natural refinement?"

"Well, I should *say!* Lily Pearl's colored, but she's a perfect lady. Mrs. Caldwell said so herself; and Miss Lee and Miss Agatha think the world of her. And I can tell you if a colored gentleman was to persuade a white girl to marry him he wouldn't be happy; she'd always be despising him when she'd get into a temper; and very likely fling it up at him what a sacrifice she made for him until he would be desperate and driven to drink, maybe."

"Yes, it might be," acquiesced Danton; and Matilda warmed with the graciousness of the triumphant persuader toward a convert; "I know it"—she made a little oratorical slash with her forefinger—"why, I used to think it would be too splendid for anything to be called Miss Woodward, and maybe meet and marry a rich gentleman; but now I am called so, and I'm a companion and all that; though they're just as nice to me as can be, I'm not especially happier; in fact, I'm homesick every blessed minute, wishing myself back in Pittsfield with Anna and Minnie and—and my friends. Half the time

they talk about things I can't understand; I got a good education, too; I went through the grammar school and two years in high school; but it isn't in books the things *they* learn or the way they feel. And I don't think I'd ever like to marry a man like Mr. Giles, who is the most careless man about leaving his things round I ever saw on earth, and never talks about anything but the mill and the new electric railroad he is going to get; and isn't fond of art or music or poetry. I'll be thankful when I get back to Pittsfield and the girls' club and the Athenaeum and the lectures, and—and the mountains.

"There's a—a gentleman friend of mine there; he's in the electrical business; he's not a professional chauffeur, but he demonstrates, and he loves poetry; I can tell you being here has taught me to appreciate Dick Loomis. Now, you understand, I think the world of Miss Agatha, and I love the old general and Miss Lee; but for summering and wintering and living with, you want your own kind."

"You're more than half right, I reckon, Miss Matilda. I think Mr. Loomis is to be congratulated."

He said more, too low for Agatha's ears, but evidently of an acceptable nature, since Matilda bridled, blushed and giggled, and called after him as he went away: "Of course, nothing's decided, really; but you'll get notice if there should be."

Agatha drew a deep breath and walked deliberately across the hall into the little sitting-room on the other side of the house which Giles had given her

for her own. This room overlooked the kitchen yard, where she could see Lily Pearl boiling the ham in the great iron kettle to save heat in the house. There was the brick oven, also, whence presently would emerge the hot breads dear to the southern palate, whatever the state of the thermometer.

As Lily Pearl walked, in her white turban and white apron, with her pale light brown profile, she had the effect of a silhouette. She sang:

"Dere's no rain to wet you,
Dere's no sun to burn you,
Oh, push along, believah,
I want to go home."

While she sang Danton came around the house. He paused and watched her for a moment; both his face and attitude betrayed a deep dejection; but she flashed him a gay greeting. "Can't you rest yo'seff a spell, and tell me if Lafe Meadowes is back in these pyarts? Looked like I saw him riding by with a passel of niggers just now."

"You did. He went away, you know, last month, but came back last week, when he heard the blacksmith had gone, and there was a great rush mending the saw for the mill. He is working at the shop to-day, and I was told Danforth had offered him a job at the mill; they are hard up for hands. I'm going to take a turn there myself to-morrow."

"Well, I wish Mr. Giles wouldn't tell that nigger to stay. I don't sleep well nights when he's 'round.

I never did be 'fraid of anything, so I am not scared of him; but he makes me notional."

"I'll go to Mr. Danforth this moment, Mrs. Rutherford," cried Sidney, and he would have suited his action to the word had she not stopped him. "Don't you take on," said she lightly, "and don't you mix with Lafe. I reckon Mr. Giles has got something in his head about him, and it won't be for his good to linger here, and I don't propose save him no mo'. Sit down and see the present Mr. Giles gave me fo' my bohdah." She took a box of cigarettes out of her pocket, tendering them.

"I was all out; you are awfully good, Mrs. Rutherford. So is Mr. Danforth. Did you know he's lent me Blue Bess while I'm here?" He sat down and began to smoke. Most of their talk was not audible, only here and there a sentence; the first came from Lily Pearl. "I must say I do enjoy living; the sun shines so warm like and there are so many good things to eat and so many pleasant folks; it is sure pleasant. You know, I have been studying this mahnin' 'bout the Christian mahtyrs, yes, sah. How'd they all evah do it? I'm suah 'fraid my faith wouldn't stand the test, and I'd be a runnin' with my little tub of off'ring to Jupiter or some of those heathen ditties. So's to live free and happy."

"You *are* happy, then?" wondered Danton somberly.

She gave him a radiant smile and patted his shoulder as his mother might. "All I need is to see you

pickin' up and cheepin', honey. And I want to ask you; you didn't want any revival that time, did you?"

"I don't want *any* emotional convulsions; I want them to lead better lives."

"Well, you see, honey, 'tis a heap easier to holler and roll than 'tis to work hard and be decent and raise yo' own chickens. And it's exciting, too; so there's a general feeling amongst the folks to have a revival with every new preacher soon's crops are laid by; but I don't feel that-a-way. I nev' did take much stock in religious doings; I 'spose Lafe bein' so gifted in prayer and so mean did turn me against it; but I want to tell you that I've been feelin' for a long spell that I'd like to just lead a plumb holy life; the mo' I read the Bible the mo' sensible it looks to me; and I want to have some good deeds writ on my brain. So you sure have turned one sinnah, anyhow. But I don't see no call to mohn. I'm just going to be *good.*"

"You *are* good, Lily; a lot better than I am; I've no earthly business to be preaching. But I told them I wasn't a minister of the gospel. I only want to wake them up, these prisoners of content."

Lily Pearl shook her head again, though she smiled. "Don't wake 'em too sudden, Mr. Danton; it ain't natural nor it ain't wise. I reckon they woke us up too sudden along about the wah, dumping our freedom down our throats like whisky; and it's made some of us stupid drunk, and mo' of us crazy

drunk evah sense. My notion, Pastor, is you nevah'll make the human soul grow any mo'n you'll make a cotton plant, by pulling it up by the roots. I tried that when I was a little trick."

"Maybe you're right, Lily; I don't know; I only know I am behind the veil, and it is mighty dark; I can't see any sun shining"—he lifted his dreary gaze and as it met hers it changed, glowed—"except in your eyes," he said.

This time Agatha's conscience walked her away from the window and stood her at the opposite casement on the south. It seemed to her, however, that she had barely reached it before Danton galloped past on horseback. Only the dark oval of his face was visible; but she felt a glow of comfort to notice how erect and gallantly he sat Blue Bess.

He went by Bellingham, merely tipping his hat in salute. Bellingham returned a truculent glare, saying something in an undertone to another white man riding with him at that moment. This man frowned; he looked after the receding shape. Something he said, too low for Agatha's hearing, yet it seemed to her that she caught the one word "Shame!"

The New England woman looked out upon the smiling landscape, and her heart was heavy in her breast. Lily Pearl's song had ceased. What was Lily Pearl herself but a victim whose soul had been laid waste for the sins—was it of her own people or of Agatha's? And would the help which she

could offer be the cup of healing or only a chalice of poison and madness for these sick souls? A whimsical thought seized her. On the table lay a copy of the book which Danton carried; this she opened. "Speak for yourself," she said aloud, "and I will listen."

CHAPTER XXI

"THEY WILL NOT BETRAY THEIR COLOR!"

AT THE very time that Agatha was trying to make an end of her long struggle between life-time faiths and late perceptions, Lee and Giles were sitting on the Montgomery veranda. They both saw Lafe Meadowes pass. They both watched him.

"He comes back," said Lee, "always he comes back."

"He came back for his pay, this time," said Giles; "that's natural enough. You know I sent him off with the logs to get him where he wouldn't be bothering Lily Pearl and yet keep an eye on him. He's watched all the time. You still feel sure he's the one, Kid?"

"He is bad enough," said Lee, recapitulating as they both had done often before, her little array of suspicions; "he was in Memphis about that time; because of the dogs and getting him out of that buggy, my poor father; and because no one at all remembered seeing a stranger"—

"Which they have a wonderful way of doing, these people," interpolated Giles.

"Yes, always they notice. The dogs bark and they are curious and come out and observe the stranger. So, because of all this we agree, don't we? that it was *not* a stranger from Memphis, but one of our own people, and if we agree to that, he is the only one wicked enough."

"But we can't very well arrest him for just that," mused Giles, "and all I have got from watching him is that at present, anyhow, he is being very pious and spends a heap of time exhorting his fellow sinners. He doesn't seem to have any of the usual nigger failings except he did fall once and play craps; but he was particularly sober; didn't steal anything to my knowledge and is a bully worker. I rather hope he didn't do it, Kid."

"He has also a ver' mean, bad temper," Lee persisted.

"Shouldn't wonder. We did get a sample of that now and then when he would sulk if things didn't please him, but he didn't beat up anybody. Had your father ever any trouble with him, do you know?"

Lee nodded quickly. *"Mais oui,* I told you he stopped him once when he was running after Lily Pearl. But Lafe pretended he didn't mean to hurt her; and she laughed and said Lafe wouldn't do nothing mean to her, now; and they went back to the house laughing. I think it was he would get in terrible rages and then get over them with Lily Pearl; but he was vindictive, too. They all say he

was vindictive. And my father said he did speak ver' sharply. He didn't seem to resent; but he might. These dark people can so easy dissemble!"

"Oh, they're grand at that," Giles muttered. He looked at Lee's somber little face propped up on her knee by her hand; and he sighed. "This is no business for girls," said Giles.

"But you have promise' to tell me everything. I am your chum, you know; your comrade. And it is my father was killed."

"I reckon"—Giles heaved another sigh, almost a groan. "Well, maybe. Anyhow you seem to wheedle anything you like out of me, these days, Kid! But it's not my notion of a lady's business, this hunting down murderers. But—you needn't think I haven't found out anything for this three months' digging underground and spying on every negro family within twenty miles. And it's the most ticklish work, for the secretive beggars won't loosen up the least little bit if they get on to your being after information against one of them."

"They never will betray their color," said Lee, "whatever it was."

"Never. They might kill a criminal themselves that they would hide from us. That's the nigger of it. But I have found out a little thing, maybe of no consequence, maybe a lot. Lafe Meadowes, whom everybody supposes to have been in New Orleans or Memphis, was in Laocoon, either the day after or the day your father was murdered, for the station

agent spoke to him. He said he was after a job in the lumber mill at Galen if he couldn't get taken on at Laocoon. He didn't see him so he supposed he couldn't get a job and went away from Galen on the other railway. But I found out after a deal of grubbing that Lafe borrowed a horse from a colored man, Simpson, and rode off at a gallop. Simpson's horse is a fast nag. I also discovered that he stayed all night at the Crawleys', down Galen way.

"Now, he might have done this and been all right. Nobody at this distance remembers, of course, whether he inquired about jobs. The Crawleys have moved away. I hunted them up. They were about as expansive as oysters; I am half in the notion that they suspect Lafe was up to some deviltry, for they couldn't remember ever seeing Lafe after he left Montaigne. When I jogged their memory so they knew I had other testimony on hand, the old woman suddenly remembered that Lafe did come in one night. 'He came at five o'clock in the evening,' says she, 'and he stayed all night. He was looking for a job, but he didn't get it and went on.' See the alibi all ready? The Crawleys would have sworn and stuck to it that he came at four or so, long before the murder and stayed until morning. I didn't feel he had done it until I saw that."

"But with a ver' fast horse he could take the short cut and get in the woods and he could hide and then get back to Crawleys. And maybe he made them think it was earlier. Monsieur Giles, he did it." The

color left Lee's cheeks. "I do not wish to see him hanged," she said solemnly; "I do not wish it at all."

"Well, I shan't make you," said Giles.

"I must," said Lee; "I told you why. But it will be a most great relief to Lily Pearl when he is hanged. And he is a wicked, most wicked man. Not? And—do you think it will be breaking my oath if I shall shut the eyes, just—just at the las'?"

"Of course not. But you won't need to shut them yet a while—or ever, if I can help it."

He glanced at her; and at the sight of her quivering lip and the way she took it into custody with her teeth and the beaming gratitude of her eyes Giles had that same ridiculous, overwhelming desire to gather her in his arms and kiss her. "Just as you'd want to kiss a kid, poor, little, plucky thing!" But in the same instant there swept over him an even more ridiculous and preposterous timidity. And while the two emotions were at war in him; and his cheek turned darkly red the general opened the door. The opportunity of consolation was gone.

As Giles walked homeward, he kicked viciously at the guiltless little pigs which rooted in his path. "Afraid of the kid!" groaned Giles; "now wouldn't that jar you!"

CHAPTER XXII

THE SPECTER OF THE SOUTH

MRS. PHIL, in describing it, used to say, "It came like a bolt out of a clear sky;" and she always experienced the same glow of artistic creation; her phrase appeared to her so original and so fit. She, herself, that April afternoon, sat on the east side of the veranda beside Miss Agatha, with the family stockings and a gourd, mending them so exquisitely that to characterize such needlework as "darning" seems a defamation. "The general and Mr. Danforth were both in Memphis," she used to tell—for in time the story wore its own channel from which it hardly deviated a hairbreadth—"I must say I can't think it would have happened had they been here."

Only that morning they had gone, Tobe, who drove them, was not yet back with the surrey. Sitting on the cool, shaded veranda with the twitter of birds penetrating the sunlit air and the odor of the early roses wafted on every breeze and the broad fields filled with singing plowmen, Agatha experienced a momentary uplift of hope.

Problems seemed to dwindle in so fair a scene;

and she paid courteous attention to Mrs. Phil's interminable tale of Cousin Mary Nelson's second marriage and how artistic she was and how she had the butter for the wedding breakfast made into a cupid; "She made it with her own hands and only the butter paddle and some orange flower nail sticks; it was perfectly wonderful; and every one who saw it was delighted; it hung in the center of the table and amid the smilax from the chandelier."

"But didn't it melt?" cried Agatha.

"Oh, yes, ma'am; but almost every one had seen it first and it didn't do much harm to the table-cloth, they put it in boiling water and—excuse me, Miss Agatha, but isn't that Lucille? She seems right excited!"

Mrs. Phil set her stitches with unabated care. Agatha, after one glance at Lucille, rose quickly.

Lucille ran unevenly, wringing her hands and uttering little sobbing moans; her face had the mottled smudge that is the negro's pallor; for once, Agatha felt there was no affectation about Lucille.

"Oh, Miss Agatha, oh, ole Mis'!" she screamed, "dey gwine burn Mist' Danton 'live; dey got 'im down 't de sto', now, all tied up; an' de gineral ain't heah! Mebbe dey kill we-all, dey so mad! Oh, Lord, hab mussy!"

She tottered on to the veranda, collapsing at the first step and clinging to a pillar.

"Sit down; and get your wits straight, Lucille," commanded Agatha.

"What are they going to burn him for?" said Mrs. Phil.

She sat up a little straighter, and eyed Lucille tranquilly, but with a glint in her eyes.

" 'Count o' his killin' up Miss Matilda," sobbed Lucille. Agatha felt faint, herself; but Mrs. Phil put her stockings and gourd in the basket and rose. She might have been a thought paler, but there was no quiver in her hands; her steady gaze fixed Lucille's wandering terrified eyes as a pin would fix a fluttering leaf. "Are you sure you aren't being fooled, Lucille? Who told you?" she spoke as quietly as ever.

Lucille stopped wringing her hands; dimly she was conscious of her own consequence as the bearer of dreadful tidings; and the tragic afflatus was upon her.

"Cayn't you-all hera 'em?" she cried; "cayn't you *see* de folks a gathering?—*cayn't you-all heah de mill whistle goin'?* and de school bell?

The hoarse boom of the whistle drowned her voice; and immediately the school-house bell began to peal with the frantic haste of fire-bells, a sound that always seems to chill the spine. Agatha felt her pulses begin to pound. "Where did it happen? Where," she demanded, rather irrationally, "is Miss Matilda?"

"In de ribber, in de cole, cole ribber!" sobbed Lucille, "dey all says he done frow her in; li'le Pete done see 'im and ole man Gaither Crow; dey been

seeking shaggymanes fu' sell t' we-all; an' dey done heard de terribles' screeches an', minnit, dey seen sumfin dark wid yaller ha'r jus *frown* pas' dem; an' li'le Pete he run to de aidge an' he see Miss Matildy plain's plain a wraslin' awful wid de waves an' den she go unner; an' he see two black han's pyart de bresh an' a black haid; hit ben po' light unner dem big gum trees but he cud mak out dat much—Ole man Gaither sayd he heerd de chile holler an' he run up but, he bein' dim-sighted, cudn't mek out nary; but he got on his hoss an' come by; an' he'n his two boys dat been in de fiel', dey all come an' dey fin's de groun' down by de lil'le bayou all trompled up an' bloody an' some yaller ha'rs an' a bit Miss Matilda's broidered w'ite wais' an' de blue ribbon in hit. So Mist' Bellingham—"

"How did *he* come there?" said Mrs. Phil.

"Dey all pick him up on de way, I reckon; he *ben* dar; an' he cry out *he* know who done it; an' he rode to de sto' an' de six of dem rode round de back way terrible sly lak; an' dey git offen de hosses an' steal up to de do' Miz' Rutherford's house an' dar he ben, all his lone in de house washin' de blood offen he han's. So dey c'aihed him t' de sto' an' dey fixin' to mek a stake way out'n de woods whar you-all won't heah de screeches; an' de sto' does be full now; ef you-all go up-staihs or on de east side you sho' can see."

All the while she spoke, the boom of the whistle

and the shrill alarm of the bells beat a dreadful accompaniment; and when they stopped, the low, uneven, menacing hum of angry voices was more dreadful still. Sick with the horror of it all, Agatha could only feel, "She was always afraid; and *I* kept her here!" She did not think of Danton at all. She did not, at first, have any sensation save overwhelming horror. It was the southern woman who said: "How do they know Danton did it? He might have cut his finger or had the nose bleed; who saw him there?"

Agatha pulled herself together; she remembered Bellingham craning his neck at the hedge-rows. "Some one must go over to the store," cried she, "but *I* must go hunt poor Matilda!"

"Miss Lee done gone," said Lucille, "she ben t' de sto' w'en de news come; she 'clare she didn't b'lieve Miss 'Tildy drowded nor nuffin; an' dey not do nary t' nobuddy twell she git back. An' she went off on dat ar wil' hoss Mist' Giles done guv 'er; an' she taken de hack an' Unk' Isaac an' free men 'sides; an' dey all's projickin' roun' de ribber bank, now. Miss Lee say you-all is to go a-runnin' t' de sto' t' ca'm dem folks dar. She say git de hot water bags ready an' git hot stuff fo' Miss 'Tildy to drink; and she say she done telephone fo' de doctor an' he's on de way; an' she say I ben a plum ijit!"

"Miss Lee is right, you are," said Mrs. Phil, "or you would have told us that first. Miss Agatha—" But Agatha was already out of the room; she found

Lily Pearl in the gallery; and the instant her eyes lighted on the other's face she knew that the quadroon had heard.

"You will see to the things?" said Agatha, after she had given the directions to prepare for Lee's return; then, by instinct, she added, "*you* come over to the store, too, Lily Pearl, make a bucket of lemonade for excuse and fetch it, get Lucille to help you."

"You bes' make haste ovah there, Miss Agatha," said Lily Pearl, "I get some revolvers fo' you."

"No, I get 'em, please, ma'am," cried Lucille.

The place of the revolvers was a profound secret, yet not until later did it cross Agatha's mind that negroes were more observant than she had judged. At the moment her being seemed a chaos of terror. She did not dare think what might have happened; she knew that she could do nothing that Lee wouldn't do better, to find Matilda; and she clung with her whole power of thought to her knowledge that Matilda swam like a fish; and that she might—she *must* have jumped in herself and escaped! And she knew that she ought to help Danton if he were innocent. She alone could tell the real story of yesterday's conversation, damning fragments of which had floated to Bellingham. She hurried back to Mrs. Phil who was ready to set out. Lucille had brought the revolvers. It showed that continual instruction in serving had not been wasted, but had seeped into the texture of her mind; for she bore the revolvers on a silver tray.

"Of course," said Mrs. Phil, "we can't have poor white trash running things while the general is away. I telephoned to Colonel Ramsay to come over, but he wasn't home. Give me a pistol, please, ma'am." She took the revolvers, broke them in a dextrous fashion and put them back in shape. "They're loaded, all right," said she, "and here's your parasol, Miss Agatha, you'll need it, the sun's right wahm."

Afterward, Agatha appreciated the grotesque combination of pistols and parasols; but at the time she only clung to Mrs. Phil's mien of calm experience. "You—you don't think—" she whispered.

"Of course not," said Mrs. Phil, with decision.

Mrs. Phil, daintily stepping in her slippers, and Agatha, in her white canvas shoes, with their white gowns and their flowery parasols and their pistols had a blighting effect upon the crowd which blackened the little common between the store and the river. The men turned their heads, to turn them, again, uneasily on each other. "We hadn't ought to scare these ladies," muttered one man. He was the farmer who had bought pails the day of the debate; he had purchased a hatchet to-day, bestowing on his mild person a semi-sanguinary air. He sought for his crony, Brick Johnson, and not finding him he turned to a gentleman at his elbow, who happened to be his next neighbor; and appealed to him. The gentleman was a lawyer as well as a planter. He looked askance at the whole proceeding.

"Is Bellingham running this show?" inquired he in a soft, slow, indifferent tenor voice, pulling at his mustache.

"Looks like, Colonel," said the farmer.

"Then there's one thing sure, anyhow, sir."

"Yes, sir? What's that?"

"It will sure be run wrong, sir."

"You bet. Yes, sir. I cayn't make haid nor tail outen it, 'cept they all are hell-bent to take that 'ar pore nigger out an' kill him."

"Colonel Ramsay, Mr. Tabbert, what is all this disturbance over?"

Mrs. Phil entered the colloquy in precisely the same accent that she would have used to ask about their health. Somehow, her serene presence had an effect akin to the pouring of water on molten iron. A little hiss of escaping heat went up in the sigh which rose unconsciously. Agatha tried to find Danton amid the surging crowd of shabby hats; at last through a gap of the onlookers she caught sight of his head and shoulders.

His face was haggard and stony; his eyes like bits of glass; but he was perfectly composed.

Colonel Ramsay was explaining his ignorance to Mrs. Phil. At the same moment, Brick Johnson entered breathless. "They all caught me on the road," he cried to the clerk of the store, "the boy found me; he's coming; have they all got the man, Walter?"

"We got 'im. We got 'im!" a great shout went up.

"What's the use er waitin'?" screamed a high, boyish voice, "you fellers git busy!"

"Skin me 'live ef that ain't that thar same little skeezic Giles give the bud to, las' month," soliloquized the farmer Tabbert. "Say, get on to that ornery, bloodthirsty little cuss, will you, Brick?"

"Gentlemen," roared Brick, "let's do this decently and in order; and it ain't no place for boys. Clear the room of 'em!"

"Nor ladies, neither," came an answering roar from Bellingham.

"We may have valuable testimony," said Mrs. Phil, no whit disturbed, "I'll thank you gentlemen for a seat; there are some chairs inside the door; please hand them out."

Directed by the planter the chairs were handed out. As the boy started out the farmer laid an ungentle hand on his ragged shirt collar, whispering grimly: "You bloody little chintz bug, you *skip* or I'll murder you!"

The boy wriggled out of the grasp and dodged through the crowd which closed again, too densely for following. Murmurs arose that it was no wonder "he ben bitter agin niggers after how they done his maw." But several men, headed by Johnson and Tabbert, forced the boys out of earshot.

"Will you gentlemen, who are for doing justice, please get a little near us; we may need you," said Mrs. Phil. "Now, what has happened?"

"Murder, most foul," returned Bellingham.

In spite of herself Agatha shuddered; it might be right. Why had she brought the girl with her?

"In the case of murder," said Mrs. Phil, "there must always be an inquest on the corpse of the murdered person; where is it?"

"In the Black River," answered Bellingham with solemnity. "It may be days before it can be found. But we have the murderer, here."

"My husband was a lawyer; I do not see how you can have an inquest without a corpse. You're a lawyer, Colonel Ramsay; is this proper? And have you taken *no* steps to find the body of this poor girl?"

The men looked a little aghast; but a new-comer on the outskirts spoke up. Three men in a boat were dragging the river, now, he said, and Miss Lee Montgomery and two more were riding up and down the shore.

"In that case it might be well to postpone the inquiry until we hear from the search party, gentlemen," suggested Mrs. Phil.

"Yes, yes," said Agatha, "and all of us go to hunt!"

"Huntin' cayn't holp the pore critter, *now*," said old man Crow.

"Oh, damn the red tape!" bellowed a voice out of the crowd, "le's try him now and not lose time." Cries arose on all sides.

"Yes, now! They're tryin' to get the black fiend off to send him to jail!" "Yes, and then the lawyers

will get him off. He's got money!" "Look at his clothes, better'n *I got!*" "Damn impudent coon. He says yes an' no to white folks!" "He needs killin', all right." "Will you let him off just because he throwed the po' gyurl in the river?"

The rage of the crowd swelled past the puny barriers of politeness to women, the blood hunger was on the rabble of half-grown boys; and the men had the ferocity born of the most haunting of terrors.

"Then *try* him, gentlemen," pleaded Mrs. Phil, still calm and courteous, "but be sure you got the right man and that *he* isn't running away while you are hanging an innocent man."

"Thar's suthin' in that," urged Tabbert.

A chorus arose reciting in fragments the Crows' testimony and the mute accusal of Danton's hands.

Mrs. Phil waved her hand in a wearied fashion. She turned her eyes on Danton: "You tell them how it was," said she; "of course, we know you didn't do it. You tell them!"

"They will never believe me," he answered quietly, "but if you ask me, Mrs. Montgomery, I will." He lifted his face to Bellingham, "If you will free my right hand, sir, I'll swear to my statement."

Bellingham shrugged his shoulders, "I don't guess. Nigger oaths ain't worth the chance you'd git to light out," said he.

In turn, Danton sneered. "You will not believe me. You wouldn't believe me though one rose from the dead to tell you; but *this* is the truth, before

God. I was walking on the river bank when I heard a woman scream; I ran forward. It was Miss Matilda Woodward, Miss Danforth's companion; she was struggling with a man. I had my knife out, for I had been gathering mushrooms. I called to the man. He turned and struck at me. He hit me, but I struck him with my knife; my foot slipped in the mud and he hit me over the head, I don't know with what, I think with a piece of iron, and I staggered and he hit me again so hard I tumbled over. When I came to myself, he was gone and so was the young lady. I ran about a little making sure that she was not somewhere in the woods, but I didn't find her; I was sure then she had run away while I was struggling with the man; and then I went back to my boarding place to wash off the blood—"

"Where's your knife?"

"I don't know," said Danton, "I dropped it when I fell; I didn't look for it; it is an ordinary pocket knife, it hasn't any name on it."

A knife was shown him. He admitted that it might be his. There were stains on it. "That's what he killed her with!" shouted some one; the crowd groaned.

At this point Colonel Ramsay suggested that the business should be conducted in an orderly manner and the prisoner allowed benefit of counsel.

"I will be the prisoner's counsel," spoke up Agatha. Danton's story had aroused her hope; if it were true Matilda might have escaped. She had

not opened her lips before; "but I *may* wish to take the witness stand—"

"Reckon you best let *me* take the place, ma'am."

After some delay, which Ramsay protracted as much as he could without antagonizing the mob, a rude court was organized, with the clerk of the store as clerk.

The position would have fallen naturally to Ramsay, but his choice of another office prevented, therefore a friend of Bellingham, a rising young lawyer, who was with him when the alarm was given, was made the presiding officer of the court; and Bellingham, on his own motion, became the prosecuting attorney. The Crows were summoned and interrogated, giving their testimony much as repeated by Lucille.

Then Bellingham asked to be sworn. The clerk, who was a notary public, administered the oath. Slowly, impressively, with no outward betrayal of an ugly, inward hankering for an indirect revenge for his defeat a month before in this very place, Bellingham told how he had seen only last week "that nigger" talking to the "poor, murdered white lady"; he couldn't hear all that was said, but it was pretty plain, and it made his blood boil, that the man was daring to ask that young white lady to marry him." Here the air was penetrated by a strange sound, neither groan nor yell, but ominously like them both fused into one by that deadliest wrath of all, the fury of race hatred.

Agatha grew cold. "I know *that's* a lie," she whispered to Colonel Ramsay; "give me a chance to tell them!" Ramsay's own face was dark; but he looked at her shrewdly. "Do you really know, ma'am, or do you only feel sure?" said he.

"I know. I was at my window, I heard the whole conversation."

"That's going some. I'll see you get a chance." Then he confided to Brick Johnson at his side: "If we hadn't hustled those boys off I wouldn't give much for our chance with that fellow. He'd be a goner. Don't know but he is, anyhow. Yet, I can see the bump plain on that fellow's head. Corroborates him a *little* bit, don't you reckon?"

A quiet, undersized man, who looked sleepy through all the excitement, had gradually edged his way close to Ramsay; he now slipped a drawling word into his ear. "That Bellingham is a liar inside his slick skin. I'm Tony Atherton's brother. He was killed in an election row, two years ago. I don't know who killed him; chance shot they said; but I know who stirred up the row by stealin' the ballot-boxes and anything Bellingham is keen for you can count me on the other side. I'll help you defend that nigger if one of the ladies will kindly lend me her gun."

Agatha put hers into his hand, for which he thanked her, very politely.

But Mrs. Phil, sitting primly in her chair with her little feet crossed, continued to hold her revolver

as if it were a fan; and smiled her gentle, attentive, company smile.

Bellingham, noting the transfer of the weapon, saw the quiet man; and his loud voice grew husky. Very soon he sat down.

But his friend took up the war cry. "Do we need anything more?" he shouted so loudly that the exiled boys by the river bank, still loitering near on the chance of joining the mob, could hear and yelled back:

"No! No! Lynch him! Burn him! Burn the black nigger dog!"

The men shuffled with their feet, and their faces showed the rising gale of rage in them. Yet they were not swayed beyond the point of reason, not yet.

"No," cried Mrs. Phil, "gentlemen, do not let the guilty man escape and kill the innocent man who tried to save her! Who did save her, I believe. Wait on Miss Lee. Wait till my father comes!"

"That's right! Wait on the old man, *I* say,"—this was Tabbert, "'tain't fair to *him*. We've got the feller; he'll keep overnight. Let's go hunt the pore gyurl like that lady sayd." But again rose that deep, ominous voice of the mob, impatient with whatever would balk its vengeance.

It was noticeable, however, that Bellingham did not lead it. The little, sleepy man was looking straight at him; he glanced first at the white sling in which Bellingham carried his arm, next obliquely

down to his pistol barrel, and his lips formed a queer smile.

"Some of those hill-billies have got rifles; they'll stand off and pot us," remarked Ramsay. "But I can fix that Tim Cabel all right; and I'll leave Bellingham to you; but I don't think it'll come to that." He raised his own voice. "You are fair men in Perry County, they say; good, honorable, law-abiding citizens; be fair now; if this niggro, here, was what Mr. Bellingham thinks, I'd be the first man to see he got his deservings; but the people who know him best here tell me he is a decent boy. If his own story is true he deserves the thanks of everybody here. And you can all see he has got a bump on his head, like he would have. For my first witness I call Miss Agatha Danforth, of Boston, Massachusetts, who has been among us for only five months, but has, during that time, founded the Galen hospital, cleared off the debt from the Galen Methodist and the Galen Episcopal churches, and done innumerable kindnesses to suffering individuals all through this county; and I think the least we can do now is to listen to this estimable, gifted and charming lady and weigh her words. Miss Danforth!"

There was a murmur of applause; the hill people did not know Miss Danforth; but many of the bottom lands people had been helped through some hard passage by her. They whispered together. That regard and deference to women innate in the humblest white Southerner, was working, and a profound

hush which Bellingham did not venture to break, helped her voice to reach to the farther confines of the crowd.

In answer to the questions which Ramsay put with unexpected skill, she deposed that the murdered woman was her companion—"at least," said Agatha, "she is reputed to be murdered, but until her body is found I shall hope that she somehow has escaped; she was a good swimmer."

"Dead folks cayn't swim," bawled a boy's voice.

"That damn Piny Boneset," groaned Brick Johnson, "he's got back some way."

"But the little boy saw her struggle—"

"An' go unner! He stabbed and murdered her, cuss him; and we'll burn him fo't. He killed her jess 'case she wudn't marry him, the—" but here the exasperated Tabbert choked the words skilfully down the small mischief-maker's throat. "You jess swaller a little o' you rattlesnake spit, you young devil, an' let the lady talk; I git another word from you, I'll tote you off an' lick you, myseff."

These words he whispered and the crowd, eager to hear the "great rich lady" testify, murmured approval.

Agatha felt faint with the horror of it, but she forced herself to speak. She made her wits work. Yes, she was acquainted with the accused; had known him for many years. He bore the highest reputation. The prosecuting attorney shouted out: "Wasn't Miss Woodward very much interested in

the colored people? in their advancement? in their education? in their elevation? Didn't she believe in them?"

Ramsay would have interrupted the questioner but for Agatha's whispered appeal. She looked the man full in the face; she answered: "No."

"I asked you several questions."

"I answer 'No' to each and all of them."

"Do you mean you are not interested in the colored people, Madam?"

"I don't mean to tell you anything about myself; you have not asked me. You asked me about my companion. I answered you."

"I appeal to the court. We have the witness—" Ramsay knew that his impromptu jury liked the ceremonial; he returned to the direct examination. Did Miss Danforth know of any such conversation as that described by Mr. Bellingham? She did; she had overheard it all from her window, unseen by the people talking. Sidney Danton had brought a book to lend to her, Miss Danforth—at least so she thought; it was a book written about the colored people, and he told of a colored man who had killed himself because a white girl wouldn't marry him; and Matilda expressed her horror and repulsion at such marriages; the words reported by the last witness, so far as she could recall, were perfectly correct. Danton agreed with her and spoke of a colored girl who cared for the dead man and how much better if he had married *her;* and then he talked

about other things a little and went away. "Didn't he ask her to marry him?" shouted Bellingham.

"He did *not*," said Agatha.

A few more questions followed, regarding the accused. Did he seem to have the least ill-feeling or resentment toward Miss Woodward for anything? Not in the least. Was he perfectly respectful in his manner? He was. Was he the kind of man who would be likely to do such a frightful deed? "No, sir, he was the kind of man who would be likely to risk his life to prevent it; as I believe he did risk it; and this is what he receives for his courage. But I can tell him, *I* am unspeakably grateful to him." Her eyes went to Danton over whose frozen features ran a quiver like the thread of crack that comes in ice. "And I now offer a reward of a thousand dollars for the arrest and conviction of the real assailant."

"Take the witness," said Ramsay, who knew when to stop. He whispered in Agatha's ear, "That will give them something to think over. You were splendid."

"Oh, do you think I can go, now, and look for my poor girl?" said Agatha. "Of course, I can't do anything, but if I could only find out if they have found her; and if they have there are many little things—"

"Miss Danforth"—it was the judge who was speaking; and Bellingham had been whispering in his ear. "Miss Danforth, do you believe in marriages between persons of African descent and white persons?"

"I do not," said Agatha composedly.

"Of co'se she doesn't," interpolated Mrs. Phil, with reproach in her mild accents, "and I am surprised you should ask such a question, Tim Cabel, a boy that was in my own Sunday-school class in Virginia."

"I'm rather surprised at it myself, Mrs. Montgomery," murmured Cabel; "this thing is getting powerful mixed in my own mind."

Agatha, feeling an excess of her same confused admiration for the little southern lady, marveled at the confidence which from the first the Southerners had shown in Danton. She guiltily remembered her own recoil when she had heard the first given testimony. They had been surer than she. But, oh, where was Lee? And what had happened to Matilda? She ought to be searching herself. But then, who would help Danton in case she were needed to report her testimony. For once her conscience was at sea; not a word of direction did it give her.

She stole a look at Danton while Mrs. Phil testified that he had occupied the pulpit of the colored church and done a great deal to make the people better.

It seemed to Agatha that the flicker of a bitter smile twisted Danton's lips as the lady described him as a "nice, gentlemanly, respectful boy." She added, "General Montgomery thinks he has a great deal of ability and that he has done a remarkable work in his church; influencing the niggroes to be polite and

honest and industrious. He follows Booker Washington's lines, of course, but he has his own ways." Considering that Danton had been one of the outspoken critics of Doctor Washington at Harvard, this gathering him under the shield affected Agatha rather grimly when she thought about it afterward. Danton's bowed head did not move. Not then; a little later he sat up, his brows contracted, his bound hands clenched.

There was a movement all through the crowd. Lily Pearl Rutherford caused it. She walked through the aisle that made itself for her, as erect, as haughty and fearless as an African queen, in her snowy turban and apron. Behind her marched two white boys, staggering beneath the immense tub of lemonade which they bore.

There was no goading the black boys over into the sight of the mob; therefore Lily Pearl, with her usual versatile resource, had impressed two of the exiled white lads on the river bank.

Lily Pearl's head was high and her eyes were bright; there was neither trepidation nor woe in her mien. She put the tub under the charge of the clerk of the store. "You get some dippers and tumblers, and I know Mist' Tabbart will see about passing things. Now, Colonel?"

"We call Mrs. Lily Pearl Rutherford." At the words Lily Pearl stepped alertly to the platform, and shed an impartial, fearless smile over the gathering. The hot and tired men were quenching their

thirst gratefully with lemonade. They had been less than human not to regard her kindly.

Being sworn she deposed that she knew the deceased, "Only I don't reckon she *is* deceased," and she knew the defendant well. "*How* well?" inquired Bellingham.

"Right well, sir; he and I are going to be married."

Nobody laughed; there was in the words and in the voice and manner of the woman speaking them a simple dignity that vaguely touched these men who were husbands and fathers; and the look which she turned on Danton was eloquent of an affection so devoted and so stainless that Tabbert muttered to Brick: "Needn't tell *me* lies; that woman is all right!"

"And he had neither desire nor expectation to marry any one else?" said Cabel.

"Of co'se not, sir. He aimed to marry *me;* and he hoped to persuade Miss Danforth to give him money to staht a school fo' trainin' colored boys and gyurls to be waitahs and coachmen and cooks and all kinds of servants. I'm a cook, myself, sir."

"And a bully good one!" shouted Tabbert.

"I wouldn't contradict you, sir; I aim to be!" Lily Pearl flashed back her infectious smile.

"Gentlemen"—Ramsay saw his opportunity and seized it—"gentlemen, anybody who would stop a man who was engaged in such a beneficent project as that deserves what his wife will say to him."

There was a laugh, the first real laugh; and Anglo-Saxon human nature began to affect the crowd. Ramsay's afterplea was moving and ingenious; it was well received; the laugh had been the plow which prepares the land for the seed. The crowd was veering in its passion. Ramsay turned its very anger to his own account, as Agatha whispered to him. "This lady, whom you all know and respect," he cried. "*She* asks me why do you-all waste time? You are letting the fiend who did this escape, while the honest, brave, faithful colored man, who tried to save her, is being tortured by you! He's marked that devil for you. Go, seek him before that blood is dry! A negro with blood on him. It was a negro?" He turned to Danton, who nodded. "Yes'r!" shrilled the little Crow boy. "Then in God's name, haven't we fooled away enough time? Let this man go, and get busy!"

A murmur arose that Colonel Ramsay was right; they were losing time. "And do you expect that assassin is sitting still waiting on you-all?" Mrs. Phil cried, "there's another train to Memphis to-night."

Cabel held up his hand. "The court proposes," said he, "that this court do adjourn, and that the prisoner be remanded under the care of Mr. Bellingham, and whomever he may appoint to help him until to-morrow morning. Maybe we'll have a choice of prisoners then."

Ramsay swore under his breath; the crowd, how-

ever, jumped at an alternative which would free them for the hunt without risking the loss of a possible real criminal.

"Nev' mind," soothed the quiet, sleepy looking man at Ramsay's elbow; *"I'll* see Bellingham plays fair."

"I object, your honor," began Ramsay; and stopped, for a shriek rang out from Lily Pearl—a shriek not of fear or pain, but exultant joy. And she pointed to the highway along the side of the forest. Every head in the crowd went round as if jerked by a rope. Every soul there could see the wagon drawn by two galloping horses urged to the top of their speed by Lee Montgomery, with voice and whip; every soul could see the fair-haired girl who crouched beside her, and could comprehend Lily Pearl's piercing scream: "Yon she comes! Yon comes Miss Matilda, herself. Ask *her!"*

Then, and for the first time, Agatha felt sure of Danton's innocence; for he sat up in his chair, erect, eager; he held out his bound hands to the man who guarded him, saying: "Mr. Officer, please get your knife ready. And cut these!"

And as by some electric intuition the whole crowd veered, the boys first of all. When Matilda, Lee's long coat covering her dripping gown, was helped on the stage and stumbled first of all into Mrs. Phil's arms, the boys roared the loudest, "Turn him loose! He didn't do it!" before Matilda could open her chattering teeth. She was cold as well as wet, and

Agatha stood beside her and held her with a firm arm in hers and an inexpressibly thankful heart, for her eyes had met Matilda's and Matilda had said: "Oh, Miss Danforth, I've lost the money, the twenty-dollar bill," and Agatha perceived that this was the heaviest weight on the girl's soul.

"But I'll make it good," said Matilda.

"Indeed you won't," said Agatha; she had hard work to restrain a hysterical laugh. "Aren't you hurt a *bit?*"

"Not a bit, ma'am," said Matilda; and she actually smiled, "but I don't know what would have happened but for Mr. Danton. Oh, please tell them not to hurt him! Where's the gentleman I ought to talk to?"

"I reckon I'll do, ma'am," said Timothy Cabel; "hold up your right hand." Being duly sworn she gave her testimony; and with so much clearness and fortitude that she was Agatha's final surprise.

She deposed that she had gone to the store to change a bank-note for Miss Danforth. She put the change into her chatelaine bag; but she didn't go directly home because she saw some mushrooms which Miss Danforth had asked her to pick if she found them; and she had got farther and farther into the wood, seeing more and more of the mushrooms. She had filled her basket and was walking close to the river bank where the last ones grew when a big colored man jumped out of the bushes and grabbed her bag. She screamed; she was dread-

fully frightened; yes, she screamed as loud as she could; but he grabbed her by the throat and told her to give him the bag and stop screaming and he wouldn't hurt her; but it was Miss Danforth's money, and she was too scared to do anything but hold it tight until he choked her, so she dropped it; and then Mr. Danton came. The man had a big iron bar in his hand; he said he'd split her head if she didn't stop yelling; and when Mr. Danton came he hit Mr. Danton with it, and Mr. Danton stabbed him with something, for she saw the blood on the man's white shirt; then he hit Mr. Danton again and knocked him to the ground; she thought he was dead, and tried to run; but the man caught her, caught her by the arm, and she tore away (the sleeve came off), and she jumped into the river. She dived under, so he wouldn't see her. And she swam and swam and swam. She swam close to the shore; and rested, holding on to the trees in the water. She didn't dare come out. But, after a while, she heard Miss Lee's voice. Then she called out, and they pulled her up the bank, and Miss Lee gave her some stuff that burned her throat and wrapped her up and brought her back. She came straight to the store because she was afraid they would hurt Mr. Danton, by mistake.

No sir; she didn't know the man who grabbed her bag. He had a white handkerchief over his face, with holes cut in it for the eyes. He was very tall. No, sir; she didn't think she had ever seen him be-

fore, but she wouldn't take her oath to that, because all colored people looked alike to her. Yes, sir; she was sure the robber was a colored man. She could see his hands and his neck. No, sir; she hadn't the least idea who he was.

"And now, Mr. Cabel," said Mrs. Phil, "won't you please let Miss Danforth take this poor child home; and you tell her before she goes that you are not going to hang this boy for saving her?"

"We sure will. Don't you worry, ma'am," said Cabel; and as Agatha carried Matilda off she heard him address Bellingham: "I reckon we-all got the wrong pig by the ear."

"And now, you have wasted a good hour," said Mrs. Phil. "Don't you reckon you-all better get your horses and get out after that nigger with a stab in his shoulder."

"I reckon," surrendered Bellingham; and he sat in morose silence while the guard severed Danton's bonds amid a cheer from the men who so little a space before were shouting for his blood.

He didn't speak to Danton. Neither had he a word for the sleepy looking man who had joined the crowd on horseback which Colonel Ramsay was heading. Ramsay had waved aside Danton's thanks with a bluff disclaimer of any interest in anything but justice; but as he moved away, he turned abruptly on his heel; his eyes held the dazed and turbid eyes of the dark man. "Don't get bitter over this, boy," he said in an undertone. "God knows it's

natural, but it won't do a bit of good. And remember these ladies were mighty good friends to you this day."

In a little while only Mrs. Phil and Lee remained; even Lily Pearl, to whom Danton would have spoken, was gone; so he pulled himself together and spoke to them of his gratitude.

Mrs. Phil smiled her tranquil, soft smile. "Why, of course *we* knew you were not that kind. And we wouldn't let them be foolish: Will you please tell Lily Pearl that Miss Agatha is to dine with us? Miss Lee will sit with Miss Matilda; and Lily Pearl must make you a cup of coffee and some good egg-nog. You take it, too, and you tell all the colored folks to quiet down. Nobody's going to hurt them. Now, one thing, Danton, I didn't suggest asking you any questions, while Mr. Cabel was asking you just how the other fellow looked; I don't feel equal to preventing another lynching; but was it any of our folks?"

"I only had a dim glimpse of him, Mrs. Montgomery," said Danton; "it is shady under the trees, and he seemed to have a kind of mask made out of a handkerchief on his face."

"Well, we'll catch him, but I must confess I hope not before the general gets home."

"I share the hope, madam," said Danton, lifting his hat. And he watched her a little space, as she walked daintily homeward, parasol furled, for the sun was declining, but still carrying the pistol in

her other hand. Lee took a swinging pace beside her, in her khaki gown and flat-heeled low canvas shoes, her black braids ruffled by the breeze.

"The southern quality," ran his thoughts. "The old South and the new; different enough, but alike in their courage—and their pride. My great-grandfather, ladies, was a Montgomery"—he swept his hat from his silken black curls—"my kin, I salute you. And I forgive you for helping save my life. You did me an ill service; but you meant it in kindness, and you did it bravely and well."

CHAPTER XXIII

THE ANGEL BEHIND THE VEIL

D'ANTON found Aunt Chloe waiting for him at the cottage door. "Lily Pearl she done gone fo' a spell ovah t' de big house," she explained, "praise de Lawd, an' all dat is widin me magnyfy His 'oly name. I ben hidin' ahind de big woodpile whar I cud heah a right sm'at; an' I prayed an' wrastled wid de Lawd an' you is free, my lamb; an' mo' respected an' helt up'n evah."

She was trembling with her emotions and exertions and tears shone in the brown rings of wrinkles about her eyes; and the dim eyes were bright with them. "I made dat 'ar wuthliss, triflin' Pelagy Ma'y take de baby an' hide. I didn't leave a speck er fiah'n de house, fo' dat gell 'ud do mischief widout knowin', she does be so tarrible dumb-haided; an' I instructid her strict not to scare dat chile; so I cud go. Now de li'le trick's runned down to Aunt 'Becca's an' Lily Pearl done got yo' bath all ready; an' yo' supper waitin' fo' you wid special t'ings f'om de big house and you is to take yo' ease an' not see nary twell to-morrer, dat whut Lily Pearl say.

Gwan, now, son, and bresh yo'self an' slick up an' I git yo' supper offen de stove an' on the table!"

"But, Lily, when will she be back?"

"Lily Pearl gwine stop de night wid Aunt 'Becca an' de chile; but she come back heah fust ayftah you-all git yo' suppah, she say. You-all set outside an' smoke an' wait on her an' study. Fo' de mercies of de Lawd sho' done ben show you dis day."

When Danton came from his bath, in his crisp, clean clothes, to the tempting repast served on Lily Pearl's best table-cloth in Lily Pearl's best china, his eyes fell at once on a slender vase, in the center of the table, containing only three roses of the same color, arranged in the Japanese fashion, which he had taught her. Unconsciously his glance included all the shining neatness, the homely comfort of the room. It passed to where the open doorway framed a glint of water and greenery of that wonderful jeweled glow which the early sunset light gives. And he felt a rush of tenderness, like a cool wave, soothing his hot, bruised heart.

He bent his head over the old woman, to kiss her wrinkled forehead. By nature he was an affectionate fellow; and, long since, his caressing ways and constant thought of her in many small things had won Aunt Chloe's heart. "Home seems awfully good to me," he said, "but I think I'll have to ride after I've seen Sister Rutherford a minute. There's my old granny, you know; I'm afraid if I don't run

over there and ease her mind she'll get some weird news of me and be taking on—"

" 'Deed she won't, den. Lily Pearl done had de use er de telyphon, an' she got a boy ovah de sto' at de cross-roads dar to run to Lize, yo' gran'ma's gell, an' she done tole 'er de full tale; but she didn't be to breave a wud twel mahnin', an' not den befo' youuns cud tell hit yo'seff."

"But there was a boy from Galen way; and he was going straight by her house, so I scribbled a word or two and told him to carry it to Lize; I'm afraid he'll mess it somehow and be talking—"

"No, sah, he won't; Lily Pearl she done tole him she ben gwine telyphon an' fo' him wait t' de cross-roads an' gin Lize de lettah, *dar;* he won't pyart lips wid yo' granny."

"I never did see such a woman."

"De man dat git Lily Pearl sho' gits a good sensible wife, an' de Good Book say her vally ben mo'n rubies," pronounced the old grandmother solemnly. He prepared her pipe for her with filial attention; and she sat on the east porch smoking it contentedly and praying at intervals; while he on the south end, in a far less placid frame, smoked his cigar and waited for Lily Pearl to come. The moon burning red behind the dark forest wall rose into a sky of steel blue, and dappled silver and dun clouds; became golden and then white fire, and flooded hillside and plain and burnished the swift river while the ripple and the lap of it blended with the soft multi-

tudinous din of the warm night. Like a great bass viol the frogs were croaking in the slash; a screech owl sent forth its uncannily human wail from the woods; the busy insect life hummed and whirred; and clear and thrilling sweet through it all, a mocking-bird was singing to its mate.

Insensibly the tense nerves of the man relaxed; the weight on his heart eased a little; his mood of chaotic despair was numbed.

"It's awfully pretty," he murmured, "and Lily's coming!" It was strange how intensely he longed for her. Almost as he had longed for his mother, as a little, miserable, humiliated, frightened child. His need of her was deeper than any outcry of passion that he had known, that he might know again; but to-night it was only the comfort of her, the wonderful comprehension of her that he craved. At last she came, silhouetted against the river as she walked along the path by the curving river bank. She was all in white, and the folds of her gown fell in gray shadows. Her beautiful arms, the tint and shading of old ivory, hung by her sides on the white. Whether by accident or by some obscure instinct of coquetry, who knows, she had taken off her turban, whereby the dusky hair, with its shallow waves showed how its luxuriance was bound about the shapely head, set deer-like on her splendid shoulders. The moonlight was so bright that he could discern the gleaming of her eyes, the pale scarlet bow of her mouth. With the removal of the turban she seemed

to have wrought a subtle change in herself; no longer did the light, alluring creature, whom he slurred with contemptuous classical nicknames, smile her baffling and languid smile; no longer, even, was she the type of the world mother on whose deep bosom suffering could sob itself to rest; before him walked divinely a princess too tender and too gay to grasp for her crown.

Hatefully enough he found the air of the white man's slave song beating through his brain:

> "Nellie was a lady; last night she died;
> Toll de bell for lovely Nell,
> My dark Virginia bride."

"You shan't die," he cried to himself; "but you *are* a lady, and you *shall* be my wife."

He caught his breath sharply; every other sensation in him gave way as the half gods go when the true gods arrive. This was not the call of the imperious beast in man; it was love, the one, the only. He had never known it before; he had tried to mistake vanity, sentiment, masked ambition, the thousand bewitching follies of the fancy, for the enchanter; tried in vain; and now in such humble guise, in the hour of heartbreak and defeat, it came to him; and made amends for all.

He rose; he went out to meet her; but when he stood close to her he found not a word in his brain.

She laughed a little laugh that was like running

water, and greeted him with a line of Dunbar's from a poem they had read together.

" 'Come in, Ike, an' 'spress yo'seff!' "

"I will," said he. With that, he knelt on one knee before her, carrying her slim hand to his lips. "Lily," he said, "will you give me the honor and the happiness of making you my wife?"

"Oh, my! yo' nice pants!" cried Lily Pearl; *"get up!"*

She very efficiently assisted him; and they both laughed; her laugh was like a flute.

"Will you?" he pleaded. "I'll ride to-night to 'Squire Moseley and get the license; and we can be married very quietly, to-morrow afternoon. You will not mind giving up a fine wedding for me?"

"Now, I knew it"—she spoke as if to herself—"I knew you'd feel you had to do that; that you were just naturally obliged to; but you ain't. You just go back to Boston where you belong, and there are educated colored people for you to go with; and, by and by, you marry a nice colored gyurl that went to college just as you did, and can talk to you about college things; and your good friend Lily Pearl Rutherford will send you the finest wedding-cake you ever tasted; and you will be thankful then that she didn't have any foolishness, nor let you have. I had to give those men that kind of talk to hold them down, and I didn't aim to keep you to it a single minute. So now, honey, you rest easy."

"Do you say that for my sake or for your own?"

"Fo' both our sakes. You ought to be glad that Lily Pearl's got good sense and ain't aiming to marry never no mo'; and can be happy by her lone; and you—"

"Lily, I love you. I never loved anybody before; I shall never love anybody again; you are the only thing that's left me, the only thing that I want; if you won't marry me I wish you had left me to die."

"It wouldn't be for yo' good, no way," she objected.

"You do care for me a little," he cried; "Lily, I am going to Miss Agatha and tell her I give it all up; what you suggested is the best. I'll beg her to help me there, not with nearly so much, but with enough to start; and with you to help me I'll begin all over again."

"But the college; but—"

"Let other men work for that. I'm spent, I'm cowed, if you like; the boys will think I'm a quitter; I know what they think, but I'm not Alexander Crummles; I can't fight a hopeless fight and fight my own doubts, too. Washington can have my sword. I have come to see he knew what he was talking about; and I didn't. I hadn't measured what we are up against. I did this day, sitting bound in that chair with those wolfish eyes below me, and I swear to you, Lily, the crackle of flames always in my ears. They will kill us all before they will let us have any chance they want. And they will protect

their women by placing them in a sea of blood if it must be. Not the bad ones, the good ones! Not the South only, just as much in the North! Giles Danforth will hunt that real assassin down just as relentlessly as Randolph Ramsay, or those little fiends of boys! What's the use of struggling? Lily, Lily, it's all dark but for you, my darling; and will *you* leave me?"

"You poor lamb!" said Lily Pearl, still not serious; yet infinitely soothing. "I don't guess I can be so hard-hearted; but I have got to study it all out. There is a big differ, boy, in the way you do feel and the way I 'lowed you'd be feeling. I reckoned you'd be squirming all over the bench you'd be so worrited with your honorable notions and your dread to have to marry me; and I 'lowed to put you out of your misery right briefly. Now—well, I don't guess I have the heart to leave you if you truly want me; but I need to study about it for a right smart—No, sah, no expressing yourself, *heah!*"

The moon was riding high in the heaven amid clear white fleecy clouds what time Uncle Isaac and Aunt Rebecca come to accompany Lily Pearl home; and they halted a little distance, seeing the two forms on the bench outside in the moonlight. As they halted the delicate liquid notes of the mandolin were lost in the words of song:

"Out in de night a sad bird moans,
—An' Oh, but it is mighty lonely!

"Times I kin sing but most I groans;
Fu' Oh, but it's mighty lonely!

"Is you sleepin' well, dis evenin', Marfy, deah,
W'en I calls you f'om de cabin, kin you hyeah?

" 'Tain't de same ol' place to me,
Nuffin's lak hit use to be,
W'en I knowed dat you wus som'ers neah."

"Ain't it 'mazing," marveled Aunt Rebecca, "how dolesome young folks is w'en dey's co'tin'? Well, I 'spose dey enjy's hit conjurin' up how lonesome dey'd be 'dout each odder. Well, I is right satisfied Lily Pearl git settled down; reckon she be a mohnah, now, right soon, bless de Lawd!"

CHAPTER XXIV

'AS WATER SPILLED ON THE GROUND

THE day after "the lynching bee," as Giles called it, Agatha Danforth rose late from slumbers which had not refreshed. Dreading for many reasons to meet Danton, with whom she had an appointment that afternoon, she yet at the behest of her conscience gave orders that he was to be admitted and word brought her, whenever he should come. Then, she sat down by her writing-desk and read over her account to Henrietta of the ghastly happenings of the day before.

Sighing, she added another page: "Now, to-day, this poor fellow to whom I am more attached than I ever dreamed I could be; and who is so much more sterling than I used to think, will come for my final decision. I told him to come. I told him that the decision would be final. Ah, I was so unutterably tired of being buffeted from one opinion to another! so I resolved in a spasm of impatience to make an end of it. I have decided and I told him that I would tell him my decision to-day. I asked him to come for it. Therefore, I can not refuse to see him. Yet I *dread* the interview. Not because I want time to de-

cide but because I have decided. Day before yesterday, in a pitiably wabbling mental state, I took down Du Bois' book, you know it, *The Souls of Black Folk.* I said to it: 'Speak you for your people; and I will listen.'

"In my soul I wanted Du Bois to convince me that at least I might give Sidney Danton half a million for his university. I read it all over from cover to cover for the third time; but this time was as different as it is reading a translation and then the original after one has learned the language. But, Henrietta, that man is a genius, a great somber prose poet. What a festering eloquence! It more than depresses, it infects you. Giles said a true thing, 'I don't want to read that book,' says he, 'if I read it before dinner I can't enjoy my meal; and if I read it after, I can't go to sleep. That fellow ought to have called it *The Problem of the Educated Negro or Light Housekeeping in Hell.*'

"Once, I asked the general to let me read some chapters in it to him; but it seems Lee has read it all to him. He said: 'It is a very painful book, madam; very painful. The writer is an aristocrat in his every fiber and he has to be treated not only without respect but with indignity; he suffers, madam. That's a book written in a man's heart-blood and written in vain.'

" 'But why in vain, General?' I said.

" 'Read the story of John, Miss Agatha.' The general, bless him! has taken of late to calling me

'Miss Agatha.' I feel as I used to feel when I was a young girl and dear, blessed Doctor Todd used to call me Daughter. He always called us all of his lambs, Daughter—because he couldn't remember our names; but we liked it just the same. Now it cheers me considerably to have the general approach my Christian name.

"'Yes, Miss Agatha,' said he, 'read that story on the coming of John; and see how more education than he has sense to understand destroys the negro.'

"Well, I read the story. The general is right. You know it, of course. Isn't it a pitiful, pitiful tale?

"Poor John! Born so good-natured and awkward and unexpectant, who would have made a useful, faithful coachman or a groom and been happy and trusted and loved by his white folks as the darkies used to say; and whom education turned so morose and morbid and exasperatingly assertive, until I don't wonder his own race found him difficult and the whites unbearable; and who finally kills his former young master and playmate under cruel provocation and gets lynched for it. By the way, I don't believe a decent young Southerner would or could have acted that way. But never mind, there is John, the African's own word of what education will do for his race. John scared me.

"We make a fetich of education, Henrietta. We think it a god, sure to take care of its devotees. Yet

what mother believes it wise to pour all the dark facts of life and all the mysteries into the unformed soul of her little son or daughter? Why should not the soul of a child race be respected by our devouring knowledge as well as the souls of children? The blunder of our good-will is ghastlier than the blunder of our avarice or of our brutal arrogance. I will not knowingly add to the crime of my people.

"But you can figure to yourself that I'm pretty miserable and ashamed this morning, having to tell Danton what I've decided. If only Lily Pearl meant all she said yesterday; but, alas! when I congratulated her she giggled and confided to me that she made it all up because it would help get Mist' Danton off. She knows our prejudices to the dregs. I urged wasn't she on oath; and she giggled again. 'I ain't feared of the Lord not understanding I didn't mean no disrespect,' said she; 'He knew how I was just nachelly 'bliged to get Brother Danton off the best I could.' That was last night.

"This morning, she told me that she had tried to let Brother Danton off; but he wanted, truly wanted, to marry her. I believe he does, too; and furthermore, college-bred, gifted young fellow as he is, and younger than her in the bargain; and self-taught, self-saved woman as she is, with a past far from stainless, I believe he will be doing the wisest thing for his happiness and his soul. The boy needs repose and comfort and happiness. She'll give them all to him. She'll love him and admire

him all the days of her life—and see through him just enough for his good. Her past will be condoned here. It will never hamper him. And as to education, she will pick it up; and as Sally Caldwell says, Lily Pearl is a dark lady. Then, too, it seems to me that Lily Pearl has the very best virtues of the African, his sunny nature, his devotion, his love of beautiful things. Dear friend, they have much to teach us, more than we guess, this sorely oppressed race, who has suffered so much and so long. Take Lily Pearl. What chance had she to grow up a good woman? Of course, she went to the bad—at first. She inherited tendencies, it is possible; and there was nothing in her education or in her influences to combat these.

"But she also inherited her sturdy, honest and honorable nature, her toleration and her beautiful sympathy. And what I respect in her is that just so far as she saw the right and fair thing to do, this poor, untutored, much-wronged woman has always done it, whatever the cost to herself. So she has steadily become better. And she has done it so unconsciously, so ungrudgingly, so happily. My, I'm glad she isn't mourning, as they call it. It is something to have a woman turn because she sees and loves the beauty of holiness; not because she fears the scourge of her sins.

"Henrietta, it is the African women like Lily Pearl who will save the African race.

"This moment, I can hear Lily Pearl singing, and

what do you suppose she is singing? Danton must have taught her the words, for they are written by a Harvard man. I know them by heart and am fond of them, but they would hardly be what you would expect from an untaught quadroon woman:

" 'Dreams that the heart doth hold
Shall the later years forget?
Days of the drifted gold
Shall you fade and wane and set?
Let the moon grow cold, let the stars grow old,
But stay ye a little, yet!'

"I wonder, does any thought of its meaning send that strain of pathos into her lovely voice. Oh, the puzzle of these people! The simplicity of them and their fathomless reserve! Then like children again. Here comes a tremendous waft of my Farina Cologne. Lucille is coming through the hall. I'm sure she is dripping with it! She made not touching my things a subject of prayer only last week; and here is the result! She will announce 'De preacher,' I suppose—oh, dear!"

But it was the blind general who rose at the faint rustle of Agatha's entrance into the library; and bowed over her hand, saying with the pathetic fallacy of the blind: "I'm mighty glad to see you again, Miss Agatha. And what you ladies have been through! And how magnificently you all went through it! I can't tell you how proud I feel of you."

Agatha was properly modest and appreciative of Mrs. Phil and Lee.

"Indeed, they're thoroughbreds, ma'am, thoroughbreds, both of them. And don't forget another thoroughbred if of a different strain; I refer, ma'am, to Lily Pearl. There's a fine creature; and I understand she is to marry your young protége, madam, that fine young colored man, Danton. I congratulate them. But how about Mr. Giles Danforth? Won't he soon be honing for a cook? But I understand she purposes to stay right on here, for the present and certainly not to leave you until she can train you-all a new cook. I understand Tobe will get his Lucy back and he's mighty happy. But here I haven't inquired for my young friend, Miss Matilda; I trust she is getting ovah the shock of her terrible experience. I know you have quantities of flowers but we have a Carmine Pillar rose-bush that I wish to contribute to express my sympathy;" —he tendered his great bunch of roses.

Matilda was still in bed, Agatha said; but she was doing very well.

"You will wonder where is your nephew, ma'am," the general went on, carefully parting his coat tails and seating himself while he passed his handkerchief carefully over his hat (he was still in the pomp of his city garments which included a shining, if old-fashioned, silk hat). "He took horse at the station, ma'am; and joined in the hunt for the guilty wretch. They found blood stains along the Galen road in the

woods; but the trail ceased at a little stream we call Healing Water, because it used to be used for baptisms. They had the dogs out but they lost the trail at the stream. So far we haven't found a trace. But we shall, Miss Agatha, we shall; don't fear!"

"I'm afraid I'm more scared of your *catching* the creature than anything else," confessed Agatha.

The general smiled. "You needn't be with Ran Ramsay and Giles to the fore. They will see that justice is done and law allowed to take its course unless he resists."

"Then—"

"The opportunity to rid the world of a vile hound without expense to the county will not be neglected, ma'am. Isn't that Danton's step? I'm glad to meet you, Mr. Danton; and to thank you for your chivalrous conduct and to congratulate you."

Danton took the general's hand. He looked at him with an expression of composed melancholy which bewildered Agatha, whom he did not see at first.

"Thank you, sir," was all he said, and when Agatha came forward with words to the same purport he responded simply: "Any man would have done as much, Miss Danforth, thank you. Perhaps you are engaged and I would better call some other time?"

Agatha's pusillanimity—such was her own word for it to Henrietta—clutched at the opening for escape, but her conscience would have none of such

evasion. "Certainly not," the voice of her unrelenting guide spoke through her vocal chords, "I know the general will excuse me if—" The general bowed; his hand sought his hat.

"If you will permit, Miss Danforth"—Danton was still on his feet, although Agatha had seated herself in the chair which he had found for her and the general, too, had been seated—"I should be glad to have General Montgomery hear the few words that I have to say."

Dearly the old cavalier loved to have his finger in every plantation pie; he sank back in his chair with alacrity. "Then sit down," begged he cheerfully, "and begin. If"—he instantly bethought himself—"Miss Danforth is agreeable."

Agatha was only too glad to keep the general. Observing that his invitation had not been accepted and that Danton did not move she repeated, "Sit down, please, Mr. Danton." Then Danton did take his seat; and with no more preface he began. "Miss Danforth, I presume the general knows that the real reason for my remaining here so long is that I have been trying to convince you of the need of another and better equipped university for my race. I came this morning to get my final decision."

Agatha moved her tongue about her lips which had become suddenly very dry; but she perceived that Danton had not finished.

"I can not foresee its nature"—what a curiously gentle voice the poor fellow had, she thought, and

how lifeless somehow, this morning! There had used to be as much life in it as in Lily Pearl's vibrating sweetness of tone; he must have suffered, suffered intolerably and it had fallen to her to deal this poor, lacerated creature the final blow; she felt sick at heart—"But whatever you may have decided, Miss Danforth, I want to say before you both that all my own opinions have been changed—uprooted. I do not believe now that my people need such a university."

"I beg your pardon," said Agatha, as if she had not heard aright; the general looked almost sternly at the speaker. "Do you mean," said he, "that you do not any longer desire to have Miss Danforth endow such an institution?"

"I mean that precisely," replied Danton in his monotonous, tired voice. "I am afraid to take the responsibility. I think there are enough opportunities for the higher culture tempting my race, now. I believe it would be wiser and kinder to them to spend whatever money Miss Danforth's generous heart may prompt her to give on existing colleges or on the industrial schools. I am almost convinced that the industrial schools need it the more; but I think that a school for the training of servants would supplement the industrial schools most usefully of all. There," for the first and only time, his lips moved into the dreary semblance of a smile, "there is a field where the white gentry will help us and the poor whites will not oppose us. It is still left us; but

if the emigrants once come here, we may not have even it left."

Agatha groped for words in her abject amaze; but the general broke out: "There is sense in what you say, sir. Those poor people have been like sheep without a shepherd, ever since the war. No matter that they didn't want the shepherd and would like to kill the coolie dog, no matter, they needed him. Look at what they are when the guidance is removed! Look at Hayti, look at Liberia, even. We can't expect slaves to have freemen for children. The race has to have time and we have flung responsibility upon it. We were, all of us, at sea, then, but I trust we have learned since. 'Experience,' says the great thinker, Carlyle, 'is a teacher good and true only he demands such fearfully high wages.' We have surely paid such. Let us hope we have learned the lesson, that we can not make freemen and patriotic citizens overnight, as it were. They have to learn; they have to be guided while they learn; and the less they assert themselves until they learn, the better for them as well as us.

"And I don't know a safer place for them to learn than in good white families. Anything which tends to strengthen the tenure of service; to restore in a measure the feelings of responsibility and affection on one side and respect and affection on the other will do incalculable good."

"I think he is right—in the main," said Agatha, drawing a deep sigh; "I had come to much the same

conclusion. But I have not worked out any especial, definite plan of the other sort. I shall need time; and I shall need Mr. Danton's and—and his wife's help."

"He'll help you, they'll both help you, we'll all help you with our full strength," cried the general, whose face was alight. Of a sudden it shadowed; he turned his blind eyes in Danton's direction, saying in a low voice: "I hate to think what you must have suffered, sir."

"It has been hell," said Danton. His eyes swam with unsummoned, unexpected tears; the old man's tone, his unconscious use of the title that he would have used to an equal, moved the man of mixed race out of his control; he spoke rapidly, as if the words escaped from him.

"I thought I knew what it meant to be a nigger, out there in Massachusetts; I felt the contempt there under all the veneer of sympathy, all the condescension, the patronage and the kindness that was commanded of their consciences, not prompted by their hearts."

Agatha opened her mouth—and shut it; she was remembering the time that she had hidden in her own writing-room, rather than meet the man who spoke.

"I thought I had drained the devil's cup of humiliation; I had only tasted it. Then, I still believed in my own race, I believed in their asserting themselves; in their defending their right to the ballot, to civil and social equality. I thought

that Washington had wronged us by taking his course; I called his counseling submission unmanly; it was *not;* he and he alone, almost, has had eyes to see. But I came here and lived among my people; I learned to know them. Every effort I made to appeal to their reason and their conscience was utterly futile. I did influence them, but it was through their feelings. That was hard; but there was worse; I found out things about my people that frightened me.

"There was an old voodoo woman (hoodoo, they call it here, but they come from the same root of hell); she sent for me when she was dying; I'll never forget the horror of what she told me; and then when I saw that old conjuror's corpse, I felt—I, who had never been afraid of things—I felt *afraid,* horribly afraid! I was terrified by this monstrous, dark incubus; I felt myself believing it might have truth in it; I felt the pull of the race, the drag downward; it was—it was a nightmare! But don't misunderstand me. I found out the other side of my people, too. We, whom you despise, have qualities you haughty white people need as much as you lack them. We can reverence, we can obey, we can sacrifice to the last atom; and we can love beautiful things, goodness, spiritual holiness with an ardor and unselfishness that is beyond you! I found out the strength as well as the weakness of my people; but I came to doubt if I could help them, and I came to be sure that I could not help them in the way that

I had planned. I was as water spilled on the ground. At last I went to the bottom of the pit.

"Miss Agatha, I know perfectly, that if my former hopes and dreams and intentions had been understood yesterday, you couldn't have saved me; the mob would have had the fire around me before Miss Matilda got there. It's one thing to read about the Anglo-Saxon's dogged, unalterable determination to be the master race and revenge any attempt to menace it from the subject races; it's another to look at it in the furious eyes of men lusting to torture and destroy *you! Oh, I found out!* I know you will have none of us; you will drench the land in our blood first."

"Yes," said the general solemnly, "we will."

"And yet you are kind to us, you will work and fight and deny yourself for us. Those ladies had revolvers. They would have used them, too. That had to be considered. We, of my race, the race you drive me to, although three-fourths of me is white; but that three-fourths you will not count; the race you force on me, then, we are to you like dogs; and we haven't the compensation of the dog's love for his master. Something like that we had, but you have taken it away. You have thrust all the duties, all the responsibilities, of freemen upon us whom you will never allow to be truly free; and who can never be anything but dogs in your sight; dogs which once you petted, but now you only beat if they presume. The North thrust our freedom at us, flung

the ballot at us; and washed its hands of us. 'Now behave and prosper and be sure you keep away from *us!*' says the North. 'Behave and don't be insolent and demand the rights of white men; and be sure you are contented and happy,' says the South. We were better off as slaves who never had known the light."

"I reckon most of you were, sir," said the general.

"*You* do understand, don't you? You know I'm not an ungrateful cur; I'm a most unhappy man who speaks for millions of unhappy men."

"It's not so bad for them all; it's really only you —you colored gentlemen, who feel that way."

"But haven't we the most claim on you, we who are educated, we whose mixed race is due to the sins of your fathers; haven't we a righteous quarrel?"

Without his own volition, out of the turmoil of his soul, Danton had risen; he stood before the general; and now the blind man gently laid his hand on the other's arm.

"My boy," said he solemnly, "you do seem to have a righteous quarrel, but it is not with your race or mine, it is with Almighty God."

"Will you explain, please, sir?" Amid all the chaos of her thoughts, and Agatha was dazed with surprise and pity and a kind of fear, she still had room for a wonder over Danton's manner to the general. It held no hostility, but rather a deference that was near humility and a strange trustful appeal.

Did this former slave-holder understand better than she whose ancestors had died to free the slave? Then she caught the general's words:

"The barriers between the white and the black man are of God's making, not ours. Our sinful effort to break them down has brought infinite sorrow. Why in His wisdom He has created men not equal and surely not free I can not tell; I know He *has*. He does so create the world over. Men are born deaf and dumb and blind and weak or deformed, and men are born with hideous tendencies and passions that drive them into wickedness. There's nothing free and equal about it. And there is nothing free and equal about races, either. The basic reason, my poor boy, why our race will not abide any close contact with yours is that it is irrevocably determined to preserve the purity of the race. You've heard it often, but because it's a platitude doesn't prevent its being a fact. And for the rest you can't do the work of centuries in generations. A child race has to be guided as well as a child. The precocious children don't count. We can not legislate for the exceptions; we have to take the great average."

"And the poor exceptions?"

"They are not the weaklings, but the stronger natures; they will have to form a society of their own, sir, and lead their race. Unquestionably the sense of justice of the whites will lead them to remove galling marks of separation; or to mitigate them. And—

I must say I think there is something in my young friend Danforth's idea of Cuba."

"It's all dark," said Danton. "Perhaps it is the solution. But it is a solution a long way off. Meanwhile I know that we others have it in the neck." He looked up with another expression. "I don't know whether you know that I have a brother who is a butler."

"And a very good one," said the general calmly. "He has been with my friend, Senator House, for ten years. He's a fine man and a gentleman, every inch of him."

"My brother said to me once that he had a great deal more influence in the world than I, and that he was more truly respected. Sometimes I think he was right. Nobody antagonizes *him,* nobody wants to lynch *him;* he is the master of the situation. He is a great deal darker than I and perhaps it is the African that speaks; yet he seems to me to respect himself quite as much as I do; and he is far more respected."

"A man who does his duty, sir, is always respected. These social distinctions are nothing in God's sight and very little in sensible people's, especially in born and raised gentlefolk. It is only the upstarts we want to snub."

"But did you ever consider, General, the feelings of a man who *can't* snub an upstart, however arrogant or insulting he may be? *I can't* snub a white

insulter like Bellingham except at the risk of my life. No negro can."

"There you mistake, sir; your brother, unless I mistake, *has* snubbed Bellingham's kind many times. Which reminds me, you don't need to snub him, he's left the country."

"Left the country!" cried Agatha. "Oh, I'm so thankful."

"Yes, ma'am. He says it isn't a white man's country any more; and he has gone to Oklahoma. But I did hear he was afraid, now he had only one arm to fight with, that some of the men he has injured would take him at a disadvantage. Anyhow, he has gone, sold out and left, last evening right after the—ah, disturbance."

Danton made no comment; nor was his demeanor of dreary dejection lightened until Agatha spoke of his marriage; and her desire, in which she knew she could speak for her nephew, that it should take place in his house. She added details with the feminine zest for such events; and planned everything with regard to his feelings, even to obtaining an Episcopal colored clergyman visiting in Memphis. Then by degrees his melancholy disappeared. "When I think of Lily I forget everything else," said he; "I've been thrown from the top of the mountain, and some of me is broken so I'll never be the same again; but I found *her* on the rocks; and that's worth it all."

The two elders stood, one of them following him

with her eyes, one with his ears, while the horseman galloped down the lane under the arching boughs.

"Water spilled on the ground," the general repeated, "that was his life, poor lad! Poor lad! poor people!"

CHAPTER XXV

"NOT FOR ANY PAINS OF DEATH"

THE day which was to be her wedding-day Uncle Isaac and Aunt Rebecca heard Lily Pearl caroling like a mocking-bird early in the morning while she braided Antoinette's hair; and they paused to listen on their way to their duties, which, because of the wedding, were to be many and important. "Laws me!" grunted Uncle Isaac, "if she ain't a chantin' dat ar same *dismell* chune."

"Hit are a torrer verse," says Aunt Rebecca, "hit's sweet, onyhow."

And indeed, with lovely, untrained lilts and diminuendos, Lily Pearl was singing:

"Dah on de baid my banjo lies—
An', oh, but it's mighty lonely!—
Can't even sta't a chune of praise—
An', oh, but it's mighty lonely—
Oh, it's mighty slow a waitin' heah below;
Is you watchin' fo' me, Marfy, at de do'?
If you is, in spite o' sin
Dey'll be sho' to let me in,
W'en dey see yo' face a-shinin' at de do'!"

But as the song ceased they could hear a joyous voice talking to the child and the woman's sky-lark

laughter rippling through the child's sweet, keen pipe.

Both the older pair smiled in sympathy; and Aunt Rebecca said sagely: "Well, dis yere don't much favor po' Lily Pearl Rutherford's *fust* weddin'-day! Doan' you mind, Ike, 'ow hit ben de wust fallin' weddah we-uns ev' *did* hab; an' de lightnin' an' de t'under—laws I ben tarrified."

"Dar's heap er differ in de bridegrooms, tew," added Uncle Isaac; then his voice fell; "Beckie, did you-all notice dat 'ar nigger ben stan'in' by de pussimmon tree w'en we done pass by las' night? Notice how as he didn't pass lips wid us, not's much given as howdy, but jess stalk by mighty briefly?"

"Yes, I seen 'im." Aunt Rebecca's voice dwindled into the same subdued key.

"I didn't let on t' you honey, but I reckon dat 'ar ben Lafe hisself. Lafe dat done leff us t' go Texas way two days ago."

"I reckon," said Aunt Beckie.

"Least sayd's soones' mendid; an' mebbe he ben a true mo'nah an' done got de glory—"

"'Twudn't be fo' de fus' time; I distrus' sech heaps o' mo'nin' an' gettin' de sperrit; looks lak to me ef it ben de real sperrit o' grace it done stay by him longer; an' whut's mo', Ike, *I* kin tell I doan' b'lieve Lafe went *very* far. Nor I doan' b'lief but *he* ben de ve'y one who tried fo' t' kill Miss 'Tildy—"

"You ain't got no *need t'* tell hit," Isaac hushed

her; "I got my 'pinion; but thar didn't ben no gret hyarm done; an' de w'ite folks mebbe burn 'im ur hang 'im; an' I cayn't gib 'im up t' de distroyer!"

"But I is considerin' Lily Pearl. I reckon he ain't gwine let dat po' gell lib in peace, I dunno, Ike, I dunno."

"Reckon *she* ain't mo' willin' nur we-uns t' betray him, fo' all he done 'er so mean. *She* ben longer us. *I* seen 'er w'en we-uns done pass by; she ain't nev' twurn 'er haid; but afo' sun up, dis ve'y mornin' I seen 'er wid a pan an' a pail gwine t' de woods; down dar by de li'le bayou; an' I lay, ole woman, dat she ben totin' vittles t' dat ar mizable, wicked nigger."

"Well, ole man, 'tain't none'r we-all's business, dat's sho'."

Uncle Isaac agreed, but opined he should put the preacher on his guard.

"Reckon preacher knows better'n ary; 'tain't so wicked dark by dat landin' dat *he* cudn't see. Did say it ben a dark-lookin' man wid a hancher on he face; an' he cudn't see clus; but, Ike, he done *guess.*"

Her husband agreed again, but he was of a sanguine turn; he said: "I reckons Lafe's off fo' de boat at Mornin' Sun, he ben a tarrible good walker an' mud ain't mo'n shoe mouth deep ovah de wust slash now. He done got half way to de town by now; an' I reckons he don't dast come by dis-a-way de res' his life."

Aunt Rebecca did not feel so sure Lafe would run off; as he was not suspected, but it occurred to neither of them to impart their distrust to any outside their own race.

Lily Pearl herself shared Uncle Isaac's opinion; yet she had misgivings. Having placed the food and drink where a thicket, like an island in the swamp, made a safe hiding-place which she happened to know had been utilized by Lafe before, she left her merciful gift to chance. "If he comes back he can get it," she thought. "I 'low he'll find the money in the *envelope,* and he can skip out safely. I don't want any blood on *my* hands; no, not on my wedding-day!"

Her preparations had been simple; she was well supplied with clothes; and Miss Agatha and Matilda had been good fairies. It had seemed to her artless soul no misdemeanor that she should wear a wedding veil; nor had Agatha the heart to dissuade her. There were white roses and heliotrope in abundance for the great bouquet which she was to carry; she had white slippers and the long white gloves came from Miss Agatha. From Miss Agatha also came a necklace of lovely sparkling aquamarines and a locket. Lily Pearl laughed happily as she looked at her treasures. "Won't he be 'mazed that I've the wedding all ready; and a cake and fixings comin' from Memphis! I know Lucille and Tobe will git to gassin' and the ice-cream won't be frozen smooth. But that boy won't notice a thing." Sidney was

"that boy." Again she laughed her sky-lark laugh. Another nature might have felt her joy shadowed by the ineffaceable stain on the heart which she was bringing her husband; but Lily Pearl's race was not censorious about the past providing the present was clean. "And I sure will live a righteous life for evah and evah, Amen," vowed Lily Pearl in humility, but not in abasement and certainly not in grief.

After she had combed and plaited Antoinette's hair, she sat her down to her own final needlework. There remained a few touches with ribbon run under lace on her wedding gown, and after a while she came to an end of the ribbon which she was using under the lace. The old grandmother suggested that she knew of Miss Danforth's ordering exactly such a ribbon; they might have it at the store; if not they all at "de big house" (meaning the general's) or "de low house" (meaning Giles Danforth's bungalow) "sho' wud 'commerdate."

Antoinette begged to go with her grandmother; and laughing tenderly Lily Pearl stood in the doorway with the shadow behind her and watched them as they went. "Oh, ain't we-all mighty happy!" they heard her say to herself as they set forth. She went back to the house, to her own chamber, to all her bridal finery laid out so daintily on the bed, with its beautifully fluted pillow-cases and its snowy spread.

Among the billows of white and lace and embroidery were scattered gay perfume bags. She had taken

down the portrait of Antoine which had always hung above the bed. "I ain't going to give's much as a *thought* to any other man but Sidney Danton long's the worl' lasts," she had said solemnly, as she wrapped the portrait in the tissue paper which had encased Miss Danforth's last gift and put it away in the chest keeping little Antoinette's belongings, "Good-by, *mon ami.*" But—why she did not know or ask, she had not taken down the colored picture of the Virgin given her long ago by Antoine; instead, she had hung it where Antoine's keen, smiling face had hung for years, between her cherished brass posts, just above the painted motto: "God bless our Home."

"I *wish* I'd had time to have these curtains done up," she thought aloud, "they ain't soiled to notice, but I'd like everything spandy fresh! But—laws! they'll be spandy fresh before we get back from Memphis! To think of me going to Memphis on a wedding tour. That's Miss Agathy!" She laughed again, clapping her hands and crossing them on her heart, like a child. The joy in her bubbled up into the foam of song, at first gay creole melodies, but since it was deeper than gaiety, passing unconsciously into the mystical, passionate longing of her father's race; she sang; and Lafe Meadowes, creeping close outside, heard:

"I walk frow de chu'chyard
To lay dis body down;

I know moon-rise, I know star-rise,
I'll lay dis body down!
I'll walk in de moonlight,
I'll walk in de starlight;
I'll lie in de grabe an' stretch out my ahms.
I'll lay dis body down;
I'll go to jedgment in de ebbenin' of de day
An' my soul an' thy soul shall meet dat day
When I lay dis body down!"

How shall we know of the distant, obscure but measureless influence of song on the African; of the touch of words on his nerves, of the instant thrilling of his passions to the formless passion of his music? Lafe Meadowes, afterward with death overshadowing him, said: "I didn't aim to hu't 'er; I jess ben gwine say good-by an' git a passel of rags bind up my tore wether; an' I crep nigh de house and stood whar I done hear de singin'; looked lak she ben singin' 'bout *you,* preacher; an' de debbel done put his claw on my soul!" Perhaps he told the truth; perhaps more than saner and stronger souls can compute, he did struggle with the dark power upon him. He spoke softly: "Heah *me,* Lily Pearl! I hates t' distu'b you; but kin I hab jess two free' rags, clean rags; I ben hu'tid."

Lily Pearl sprang to her feet; by this, he was inside the door in the "gallery;" his face was humble; he had his cap in his hands, he looked haggard and wretched. "I t'anks you kin'ly fo' de vittles an' de money," said he.

"I'll give you the rags an' welcome, Lafe; but you got to make haste 'way from heah," Lily Pearl answered, hurriedly tearing up a soft old garment even as she spoke; "heah the rags. But make haste! They all are out ayftah de man scared Miss 'Tildy, that's stabbed, and they'll be back this way; if they don' find you the other. Mr. Giles is back and Colonel Ramsay—"

"An' whar de preacher?"

"He ain't back yet with the license."

"Then hit's true, whut I done heah, hidin' in de brake, you ben fixin' to marry *him?*"

"Yes, Lafe."

"An' you ain't neb' no mo' gwine hab no truck wid *me?*"

"Wid no other man, never no mo'."

Did he wrestle with that worst part of himself and his inheritance of evil which he named the devil? or did he only dissemble to throw the woman off her guard? Who knows? He spoke more gently still, and sorrowfully. "You done keep my sekrit, Lily Pearl, an' ben mighty good."

"Yes, I done kept all your sekrits, Lafe; 'bout Mr. Ralph, 'bout po' Miss Matildy—"

"I only did aim to git de bag wid de money; I 'lowed it ben a hull heap mo'n 'twas. De gineral wudn't give me no mo', and I done los' every cent I hab playin' craps on de boat. She screeched so she maded me; an' *he* done stab me, one er his own color; *he'd* a give me up!" He had come close to

her; his eyes went hungrily around the room—"Oh, Lily Pearl, honey, cayn't it be like hit uster was 'tween you'n me?"

"Never no mo', Lafe. Now, doan' you get giddy an' be foolish. I never did really love you, Lafe, nor you me; but I forgive you, I wish you awful well, Lafe, just fo' the laughs we've laughed together. Go 'long now or some one'll come. This ain't the woods."

"Lily Pearl, if you'll come 'long wid me, I'll marry you. I ain't suspected by no w'ite folks; an' de cullud folks won't gib me up. Leave dis white nigger wid his airs; he'll grow dispise you, see if he don't! Marry me an' I'll worship you de hull res' my livin' life. I swar I nev' lif my han' agin you; I buys you a gun to shoot me 'f I do; fust present I gibs you be dat gun—no, I'se 'bliged tell you whut on my min'; *I gotter*"—he caught her by the throat; his great fingers sank in the soft yellow ivory flesh and choked her cruelly. "Gell, I won't hu't you ef you jess keep still an' listen—"

His black eyes were smoldering; her brown eyes, clear as the depth of water, met them fearlessly; and his fingers relaxed as he saw that she did not try to scream. "Lily Pearl, I *gotter* hab you 'gain; you is my wife whutebber de co'te done say. But I'll marry you obber a hundred times if you say so. But you has to come. Look a heah, I jess ax you fo' to try me one month, jes *try* me; ef you-all ain't satisfied I swar I'll light out Norf an' nev'

bodder you no mo' fo' ebber. One month! *one week!* You steal down by de ribber bank, you know whar we uster go, an' I'll gwan now; an' meet you; an' we'll go t' de 'squire's an' be married an' we'll go to de boat; we kin, Lily Pearl, honey, we *kin—doan you shake yo' haid!* I tell yo'; if you want git some cloes pack I'll go now; an' you pack. On'y prommus me solemn you'll come. Gib me one kiss fo' prommus, please, baby, I know you ain't evah lie t' me. *Please.*"

He released his grasp and would have held her to him; but she writhed away. Not angrily, almost in pity, she said: "No, Lafe. I aim to be a good woman long's I live. I can't lie to you. I can't never be nothing to you—not for one minnit!"

In a furious revulsion of rage and despair from the false hopes that his own words had raised in him, he clutched her again; but this time with his left hand; the right flashed something and the gleam of it burned white into her eyeballs. "Yes"—his voice was hardly above a whisper—"yes. I didn't, but I will. I cut yo' wid de razor. *He* shan't hab you if I cayn't. *You gotter!*"

The fear darkened her eyes; but it was driven out by a stronger force; she gave him back his gaze, defying him.

"Never!" her eyes said, though her bruised throat was held so tightly that no word could escape. Her intrepid look unnerved him. *He could not strike.* For a breathless second they faced each other in this

dumb duel of spirit; and the woman might have won had not a sound outside startled the man, making him send a quick eye-blink at the window. His frenzied gaze in its swift circle did not catch the rusty head; the wild, freckled face and the two grimy hands dislodged by the cracking of the trellis ladder on which Piny Boneset was clinging, trying to hoist his peaked chin above the window-sill (for Piny was under the window); none of these did it find, but returning it flashed on the large photograph of Danton on the old-fashioned bureau. It was one of Danton's "class pictures," taken at his graduation, when he was in the flush of his Harvard victories. The eyes were steady, the handsome mouth smiled with pride and daring. As Lafe recognized the face, as he caught the smile, all the brute in him surged like a wave of flame over his soul.

If she had only sobbed, if she had only cried out once! He couldn't have done it, if she'd only begged and pleaded—but to mad him so! He hadn't aimed to do it—Lily Pearl! Baby! He bent to pick up the form on the floor; but at the sight of the ghastly pool curdling about it, he leaped back. Overcoming his anguish of terror—it was no less—he shut the razor, which he thrust in the bosom of his shirt; bent his head like a wild beast charging; and, moaning in a strange, unhuman fashion, he plunged past it, out of the door. His hands clenched, his long, lithe body bent, he went on in great, loping

strides until the forest swallowed him. While, almost as swiftly, Piny Boneset, whose curiosity had made so ghastly a find, raced his bare feet to the group of horsemen on the brow of the hill.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE CONFESSIONAL

NOT twenty minutes after Piny tumbled against Giles Danforth's horse Sidney was standing in the little room where Lily Pearl lay. They tell now in Montaigne how he came galloping out of the road through the woods with the song on his lips, the light in his eye and the smile on his mouth; as happy a bridegroom as ever rode over the people's highway; and how the riders sitting in their saddles before the store platform waiting their signals to follow or to seek in another direction, said rough words of compassion to each other, as they beheld old Uncle Isaac walk haltingly to the bridge's end to await Danton and give him the awful tidings. They could see the horseman rein in his steed, see the high-spirited brute fretting on the bit and pawing while he bent over its neck; see him bend lower, reel in the saddle; and then gallop like a whirlwind over the bridge; while poor Uncle Isaac sank on his knees in the dust, weeping and praying and lifting shaking hands to the blue, beautiful, distant sky.

The room was full of sunlight. It made a strange aureole about Lily Pearl's head on the white pillow; it made violet shadows in the white swathed about her throat and the long lines of her white skirts, which fell on one side of the bed. There had been no time for any sick-room toilet; for anything save the lifting her to some ease of posture and the bathing and binding her wounds. There came a soft lapping sound from the room which Lily Pearl had fitted with homely ingenuity and so much pleasant care, as a bath-room; it was the doctor washing his hands. On the arm-chair had been flung the dainty wedding finery, and there it rested, unregarded. Miss Danforth stood by the bed; by her side Mrs. Phil, who had just come with a bottle of brandy. She was setting it aside. Her tears wet her cheeks. Sidney did not see them, nor the white pity on Miss Danforth's features. Gently, making no outcry, saying no word, he stepped past the bowed form of the old grandmother, up to the place by the bed, silently made for him, and knelt there and kissed the smooth brown arm, which was cold to his lips. The doctor came out of the room; he lifted the other hand, and the tips of his fingers, with professional dexterity, felt for the pulse. "No use," he murmured, "she will never regain consciousness."

"Speak to her," pleaded a voice that he knew afterward—not then—was Lee's, "she will know *you;* whisper!" He whispered in her ear. They could not hear; but she, through the mists which

their poignant stimulants could not pierce, *she* heard him; her eyes opened; her lips smiled; and lo! they were the eyes of a little child, and the smile on her stiff lips was like a child's triumph; but it clouded when she found that she could not speak. Her fingers moved uncertainly. "Pickin' at de cloes, dey mos'ly does hit!" sniffled Aunt Rebecca outside at the window, and Lucille, her companion, wept aloud. But Lee called: "Quick, give her something to write on!"

Sidney pulled out a long envelope from his pocket (his marriage license it was); Mrs. Phil put a pencil in the stiff fingers and Lily Pearl by a supreme effort wrote:

"I *am* good—Lafe couldn't—" then the words trailed off unintelligibly. Sidney kissed her hand, crying: "I understand, darling, I understand; yes, you *are*, dearest! you are good, my own wife!"

Lily Pearl smiled again like a child that has obtained its meed of praise. And the mists thickened, never to lift again. The smile she wore did not fade; it glorified her face in her coffin; it was the mark of her last struggle and the sign of her triumph; she had held back death to tell him that at the last she gave him a soul washed clean.

He believed it was so then; but he made sure. That was the only impulse in his heart which was as if a fire had swept over it; to make sure, to know all that had passed in that last hour.

Sidney rose. He laid the hand gently on her

breast. He went out of the chamber, no one gainsaying him.

"He has gone to kill Lafe, Lily Pearl, for you," said the southern girl, while Agatha stood as if frozen; and Mrs. Phil wiped the tears from her eyes; and the old grandmother prayed aloud.

He went straight; the others might blunder, the dogs might be fooled by water; but he knew where Lafe was hiding; he had known all along, although Lily Pearl had not told him; but long before she had shown him the cunning secret place which Lafe, her husband, had discovered to her. Then she had no thought of ever meeting Lafe again.

The man would lie close there, because he could come by the water, safe from the hounds. He would need time to make him ready for the road. He would hide there, waiting for night. He wouldn't know what Uncle Ike had told Sidney, how Piny Boneset had spied on him. He would assume that he was not even suspected of his last crime; and he trusted in the unshakable African fidelity to its color with regard to his other, which every one suspected. But it was easily mollified into the most harmless sort of robbery. So he would plan to take the underground road from cabin to cabin. But he wouldn't venture out until nightfall; the woods would be too full of angry men of both races, white and black, for once hot foot on the same trail. So Sidney rode carefully, not too fast.

There were two entrances to the fastness. One

beneath overhanging boughs of oak and cypress and arborescent thorn bushes which seemed to define the bank, above a wall of willow saplings budding to the water's edge; but Sidney knew that a man could worm his body through that underbrush, wading barely waist high at the deepest, until the bank rose to an island in the shallow, still water overarched by the great trees, hedged in by the dense thicket which Indian pinks were spattering with blood-red flowers. The other way was through the brush, a path easy to find, for the bone-white trunk of a dead sycamore marked where to crouch and creep under the thorn tree branches until one reached the persimmon tree due east, and one found the glade of clear ground, grass carpeted, violet covered, where grew red and gold and tawny brown fungi amid the moss on the tree trunks; a strange, beautiful path, a strange, beautiful spot. "Lafe loved it," Lily Pearl had said; "he found it; he kept it for his *cache* where he hid things. He liked to hide things; but he liked the place because it was mighty pretty. It was queer, but Lafe liked pretty things awful well!"

Now Sidney knew why, as she pointed to the spot, a shudder had run over him; and he had panted to get back to the open air. They had come in a boat for "a fish fry" with the grandmother and the child, and Lily Pearl had taken him and the child "to see something pretty and find a heap of flowers." She had shown him both ways of access. To-day

he rode to the dead sycamore trunk; the trail made a loop, he knew; and back in his hiding-place the fugitive crouched not a stone's throw distant. The brush was too thick for sight; but the hidden man could hear the muffled thud of a horse's hoofs on the grassy road. Did he climb a tree, he could see all down the road and thus hide or flee, or were he so minded and should he be armed with a rifle, he could shoot a single pursuer at his ease. Therefore Sidney, having tethered his horse, wrote a few words on a bit of paper and pinned it to the tree. Then he approached his goal in a cautious fashion. He skirted the woodland road, and crept among the trees. He took off his boots that he might step noiselessly. He was careful of his footing. Once a green, soft ribbon curved away under the leaves where he was treading and he laughed in his throat. "I wouldn't waste time to kill you if you stung me!" he felt; he did not think, for all his mental action was too formless for words.

At the sycamore tree he halted. Under the tree he was out of sight, but he could be heard. He listened with every nerve of him. In a second he smiled; and quite collectedly he put on his boots, lacing them in haste, his revolver on the ground ready to his hand. This done, he rose, his weapon held with his elbow crooked close to his side. With his other hand he drew out a whistle and whistled three times before he called in a low voice:

"Lafe, come out!"

There was no answer, no slightest sound.

"Don't try the water; there's a boat there, waiting for you."

Only the forest murmur: a hoot owl sent out its wailing cry.

"I know the way in, both ways in. I can come. I can find you. I and the—others."

Then there came a cry:

"I ain't done nuthin'; I swar I ain't done nuthin'. Whut you goin' back on yo' own color fo', you bleached nigger?"

The face that the fugitive could not see never changed. The soft, level voice went on: "You waste time, Lafe Meadowes; stay there if you will, and let them pull you out of your trap and drag you where they are ready for you; you can see the smoke, you can hear the flames crackle if you listen." Sidney had passed a cabin where a great brush heap chanced to be burning; the acrid fumes of it were stinging his nostrils yet, a thin white column drifted above the treetops; he made his use of it, and not without effect; there was terror panting through the shrill answer.

"Dey all won't brun me fo' doin' nuffin'. Even ef I done killed a nigger gell, dey wudn't brun me!"

"You are mistaken. But how about you trying to kill a white girl? *How about you killing Ralph Montgomery?*"

"She done tole on me!" screamed the voice, breaking with fury, "now I don't keer I did kill her!"

"She kept your bloody secrets, she found you food and money; and you stole in and killed her; she would be alive now if she had betrayed you or I had, as I *ought.*" For the first time his voice faltered, but instantly grew hard and calm again. "Lafe Meadowes, this is your last day on earth; you will never see the sun set. And after death you believe there is the judgment. You can't escape death; but you have a chance to die a penitent man who has made what amends he can for his sin. You tell me everything, every word that passed; then you can come out and I'll shoot you. I shoot straight."

Lafe laughed wildly. "An' you call yo'seff a minister, a preacher, an' you don't forgib sin; yo'd oughter holp me, de bruised reed ye shall not break, de smokin' flax ye shall not squench—"

"Never mind that," Sidney broke in, not impatiently, but relentlessly, "we haven't time. You tell me; and don't try to lie; Piny Boneset saw you; he was at the window; but I want *your* story, too." He did not add that Piny Boneset saw only the end of the tragedy, nothing more. And the other, remembering that sound of shattering wood, grew cold.

It is hard, it is impossible for the Anglo-Saxon to understand the lightning transitions of the African's temperament, as little can be comprehended the intense longing of him for companionship. Lafe, in his remorse, had been horribly lonely; it is con-

ceivable that he found a dreadful comfort even in this ghastly confessional. For he told all, every word of his own threat and pleading and her defiance; told it, excusing himself, hating the other; and in the end breaking into frantic sobs and moans. "I didn't aim t' do it! Oh, my Lord! I did git de glory; I did repent; an' now de debbil done git my soul an' I cayn't holp it!"

All the while he talked Sidney's frozen calm had never broken.

"Listen!" said Sidney, "listen, and you will hear the horses, they are on the bridge in the pasture. Come out now; and take your chance for life, I've Blue Bess here, tied a little way down. None of them can catch her. Come out, and if you kill me you get the horse. If I kill you—as I shall—at least you die in a minute."

"But you got a lil'le gun; I ain't got nothin' but a razor."

A spasm contorted Sidney's face at the word; but he shut his teeth; it passed; his voice was utterly calm. "You can come or not, as you choose. I shan't give you the chance of my going in. They won't either. Giles Danforth has his rifle; he knows you killed Ralph Montgomery; he'll shoot you from the trees and they'll drag you out alive—and—and then—"

All the while they had been speaking Lafe had been worming himself cunningly along the loop of trail; he had comprehended from the first that his

single chance lay in springing on Sidney unawares and capturing Blue Bess. Now in a supreme effort of terror and hate he crashed through the underbrush and clenched and slashed with his razor. In the same instant he heard the revolver bark, something in him seemed to snap, and his throat was choked with his own blood. And then, the cool ground and the deep blue sky; the razor had dropped from his curled fingers; and a knee was on his chest. He knew what had happened. He lay supine, unresisting, his eyes fixed on a floating, far, white cloud. He was rather glad when he saw that tiny, round, black rim.

All the trees of the forest seemed to echo the report, until it was like a volley of musketry.

"Something doin'," said Giles grimly to the general riding at his bridle rein.

"Yes, sir. I reckon he has killed him, sir," said the general.

Sidney quietly put the revolver in his hip pocket. He looked at the motionless shape on the ground. He put his fingers to his shoulder and surveyed their dyed tips. All with the same faint, bitter smile. But when his gaze passed to the razor his features contorted; he turned shuddering away.

"The white in me won," he said wearily, "I took the revolver."

CHAPTER XXVII

THE HEART'S HIGHWAY

GILES DANFORTH came back with a tired horse, a more tired heart. No one who had known that "bumptious hustler" at Harvard would have recognized his face in the face of the stern and weary man who waited under the honeysuckle vines for a word with Lee Montgomery.

The young fellow had not known rest for thirty hours; but his nerves and his sympathies had been through a more harassing ordeal than his strong, young body. It seemed to him that he had seen naked human nature; he wasn't guessing or theorizing or analyzing, he had *seen* the tremendous, uncouth, fundamental passions of men working; and he was shocked and saddened. And while he watched other natures in the maelstrom his own heart had awakened. It was speaking. To think of how he had patronized and bullied such a creature as Lee! The pluck and resource of her; and the tenderness and—but who shall follow a lover's dream? While he waited he took from his pocket

a letter already read, a letter on thin, cross-barred paper, with a lining of gray for the envelope and a pretty coloring of foreign stamp. How many, many times had he run through his mail with a thumping heart, hoping for just such an envelope. He read it with a queer curling of his mouth, which Miss Gladys Vassall would not have liked to decipher.

"FLORENCE, Sunday.

"DEAR GILES—All this morning I have been sitting looking over your lovely photographs and trying to picture to myself just the life you are living so bravely and splendidly in that wild place. ('Well, it's been wild enough *this* week,' soliloquized Giles, 'but I should have sniffed at that adjective a week ago!')

"I know you suffer all sorts of privations without a murmur" (Well, what would you think of that?) "and I wonder sometimes if, sitting by your cabin fire" (Cabin fire is good) "your thoughts go back to those Cambridge days when—do you remember the day at the Country Club and the ride back in your borrowed car and how it came to grief? I never admired you so much in my life as when you put on that tire all by yourself and mended the chain. I thought you were *wonderful!*" (You concealed your feelings mighty well, then!) "And when the moon came out afterward and it seemed as if there were only we two in all the world—" (Hum-n) "And then at the winter house party, when we were lost in the woods and I went up to my ankles in that terrible marsh—you needn't say there was no danger, I know there *was;* and I know how safe I felt when you helped me." (Yes, I remember, you did

relax a bit then.) "And the next day—Giles, you did suspect, *didn't* you? that it was only that mother and everybody put such a pressure on me that I couldn't resist the whole world and so I was pretty nasty to you. But if it is any comfort for you to know I have been ashamed ever since, why I have. I've been in the worst humor all this trip. Poor mother! And I have been most disagreeable to Sir Arthur—he left this morning and I'm glad of it. What do people see in these hunting Englishmen? He couldn't talk of anything but shooting and aëroplanes and he was so boring. Everything is boring, here, and I wish I were going back to America, tomorrow.

"Will you come and meet me when we do come in May? *Addio.* No *a riverderla,*

"GLADYS."

Giles made a face and tore the letter into very small bits of which and two stray chips he made a neat little bonfire on the gravel walk.

"No, lady," said he, "Fido doesn't come back. I reckon"—he grinned very frankly—"it isn't entirely because of the bad licking he got for nothing; but because he's got a new mistress. I 'most reckon that letter would better go wrong. I wish there were some lady I could consult about it; it wouldn't be fair to ask Aunt Agatha or Lee, because they know the party. But—yes, I'll never get it; and I'll write her, confiding in her as an old friend that I'm in love with a southern girl. Sure I am, too. Bless her dear, sweet, true, plucky, little heart! But, of course, I can't say a word for ages." Giles sighed

heavily. "It would be taking a mean advantage; and it wouldn't be any use, anyhow. She doesn't care a rap for me, *that* way! And that infernal Memphis visit—there'll be a holy show of men there; but it's only fair to give her a chance to see men and to know something of the world—oh, what a rotten mess life is! But there's no question, I've *got* to keep still!" He looked so wretched at the prospect of indefinite suppression of his feelings that Lee's heart was wrung when she saw him.

"Oh, do come in," she begged, "and I will make you a cup of tea and you shall sit and rest. You will find him to-morrow."

"Danton found him to-day. No, I don't want any tea; I don't want anything except to look—at the—just to sit still, here, is all I want." He sank down on the first step of the veranda.

"Ah, poor Monsieur Giles! it has been so hard on you! You must be so tired."

"Hard on me? Well, how about *you?* you, who found poor Lily Pearl."

Lee nodded her head; the tears were in her brilliant eyes. "Yes, it was awful to see. I was bringing her a present."

"When did her grandmother get there?"

"Oh, very soon. I had only bound it up"—a shudder shook her—"but all I could think was so that the poor child shouldn't see. I sent her for aunty and your aunt and brandy. And told her to wait. It didn't seem any time before every soul was

there. Your aunt has so ver' great sense. She had bandages and liquor and spirits of ammonia and all things. In a box with a handle. And she had telephoned for the doctor already. But Lily Pearl never did speak till she spoke to *him*. Tell me, did he kill that man, he, himself?"

"Yes, he killed him. Shot him. Before he died he confessed. And that devil not only killed Lily Pearl; he killed Piny Boneset's mother. The man who shot him was in the crowd with us; and he was sure of it, and there were scars on his face, from the shot. And—we were right, Lee, you and I. He was your father's murderer. He admitted it to Sidney Danton, before he died. He made a clean breast of it to-day, too. I don't know all he said; but I know Lily Pearl was—as fine as a woman could be. But about your father; he saw your father showing the jewels to Mrs. Caldwell by the open window in the brightly lighted room. Just by accident. He happened to be on the street corner. He followed your father to Laocoon and hired a horse under pretext of going to the Crawleys', his cousins, for the night. They are on the Galen road near where it branches off from the road to Montaigne. What he probably meant to do was to waylay and rob your father, threatening him with that very own pistol of his which he had stolen. What happened, we don't know, except that if he were disguised your father knew him in spite of it. Probably the fool thought that just a handkerchief on his face would hide him

in the dusk. But I reckon it didn't, so he shot your father; and your father threw the jewels into the swamp. He was afraid to wade in there after them and he ran away. But after he got out of the pen he came back; hearing, maybe, about all the money —how much it was your father had; and bracing his queer African courage somehow. Maybe he was after Lily Pearl, too, you can't cipher out all such a monster's motives. The earth is well rid of him. I meant to shoot him, myself, if Danton didn't run him down. So, now, you will not need to see him hanged."

"No. I am glad. Though I do not pity him, no. What did they do with him?"

"Why, Tabbart is coroner, so we had an inquest. We found he came to his death by a revolver fired by Sidney Danton, and that said Sidney Danton acted in self-defense. Then we all, black and white, thanked Danton; and we borrowed some spades from Brick Johnson, who lives near there, and we buried the wretch there where he lay. Some of them wanted to drag him into the thicket and let the buzzards have him, but your grandfather wouldn't stand for that, so we simply digged a pit and rolled him in. Uncle Isaac made a prayer over him. I remember one sentence. 'O Lord, Thou knowest ev't'ing 'bout dis po' sinner, we-all only knows what wickedness he done; he sho' didn't be fitten to lib in dis worl' anny mo'n a mad dog, an' we done our juty an' done putt 'im out of it; but if

Thou, Lord, knoweth any claim he's got fo' mercy, be merciful, O Lawd! We leaves him wid Thee.'

"I guess that's all there is for any of us to say. And we left the negroes there singing that weird chant they have, 'When I lay dis body down.' "

"I know," said Lee, and her clear young voice took up the refrain, little knowing who had sung it last:

" 'An' thy soul an' my soul
Shall meet in that day
When I lay this body down.'

"Poor Lily Pearl used to sing that," she added. "Oh, Giles, it is so dreadful."

"Yes, dear," said Giles.

"And that poor Danton, she was all he had, and now she is taken away. Where is he going? what is he going to do?"

"He is going to stay in the cabin with Aunt Chloe and—and Lily Pearl to-night."

"Yes, yes, of course. Miss Agatha and Matilda have seen to everything. O Giles, life is ver' sad."

"Yes, Lee. Oh, don't cry, Kid, darling. I keep thinking all the time of that poor fellow; I know how I should feel if anything happened to you, Lee! I'd thank anybody kindly for shooting me."

"Giles!"

"I can't help it, Lee, I didn't mean to speak for ages, until you'd been to Memphis and seen those infernal sixteenth cousins of yours and seen if you

liked them better; I know it's no use, but I simply have to tell you; and if I can't win you to like me and marry me some day—"

"Have you spoken to *grandpère?*" said Lee, very straight and stiff.

"You wait one moment," cried Giles.

Thereupon he tore through the door into the living room, where the general sat with his Virginia stogie, while Mrs. Caldwell read the Memphis papers to him. "General," said Giles, plucking his cap from his head, and standing very erect; "I have the honor to ask of you the hand of your granddaughter."

"That child!" exclaimed the general.

"She is six months older than I was when I was married," remarked Mrs. Caldwell.

"But—this is so astounding."

"Miss Danforth and I are not at all astonished, Uncle Ralph."

"And your aunt, does she think you do wisely?"

"I don't know, sir," said Giles honestly.

"Well, I do then," says Mrs. Caldwell, "she told me this morning that she couldn't ask a happier fate for her boy. She did have other plans, but they were all thrown in the rubbish pile."

"My boy, I don't think I need to tell you that you have been like a grandson to me a long while; but Lee?"

"I can't the least tell the way Lee feels, sir," said Giles.

"You were very courteous to ask me first, sir."

"Well, not—not exactly. You see I hadn't the least idea of speaking to her and I—I found myself doing it and she asked me if I had spoken to you; so I bolted in at once. May I say you consent if she does, sir?"

"You may, sir," said the general formally; and Giles clasped his hand and thanked him. "Now, if you will excuse me, I'll go ask her over again," said he, and disappeared as suddenly as he had come.

"He's willing, Lee," he cried joyously. "I did it in form—all but the bouquet. And now, Lee, darling—"

"I shall have to consider it, *Monsieur,*" said Lee demurely, with as much the manner of a *demoiselle bien élevée* as she could compass; then softening, "while I am considering we'll be just as we have been. Is it not? Sit down! you look so tired!"

"I *am* tired; and I'm awfully unhappy, Lee."

"I, also, Giles. I am sorry for so many people; and we found all that cake, that lovely Lady Baltimore and the Loony polonaise that poor Lily Pearl baked for us to have on hand while she was to be in Memphis; and she had planned everything out with Lucy—"

"Lucy? Oh, yes, I remember, Lucy is back. How about Tobe?"

"Tobe has forgiven her and they both cried together; and she says 'I 'lows t' do jess perzactly lak Sist' Rutherford done tell me. Fo' she suttinly done

ben a good woman!' And she did be, is it not, Giles?"

"Lucy is right," said Giles. "And I hope Aunt Agatha will give poor Danton that training school for service which Lily Pearl talked about; and give it in Lily Pearl's memory."

"Ah, Monsieur Giles," murmured Lee, "you have the generous heart!"

"That doesn't strike me as a special grand prize flight. But I don't mind taking any credit you have lying round lose in your mind, Kid—maybe when you are a married lady you will object to my calling you Kid?"

"Never, Giles—even if I *should* be a married lady. I can not tell if so. I am not yet done considering."

"I suppose there are heaps of fellows in Memphis that will be filling your head with—I mean—I reckon I don't know what I mean, Lee; only I'm dreadfully afraid you will like some other fellow better than me!"

Lee made a grimace; she sighed heavily. "I would like to stay home; but Cousin Sally says it is a disgrace because I have not had a proposal of marriage and I nineteen; when she was nineteen she had had thirteen, and she was married to the thirteenth. She says, he being that unlucky number, maybe that was why poor Cousin Roland died so soon; and the poor little baby; but Cousin Sally never let anybody propose to her afterward and never took off her mourning. She must have loved

Cousin Roland with a gran' passion. What is the gran' passion, Giles?"

"What I feel for you, Lee."

"But no; you felt it for Miss Gladys Vassall. She was a *demoiselle bien élevée* and she was *une élegante.*"

"I suppose so. I was a puppy fool, I know, then. I don't know that I'm much better now; but I do know that you are the kind of wife to make a man do his duty. When you brought me your horse to go after that fellow, you didn't know whether he wouldn't run amuck and kill half a dozen of us; you didn't love me, but you liked me mighty well; if you *had* loved me you would have brought that horse just the same."

"Yes, Giles—for—I *did* know then. And I was frightened—oh, so frightened for you." He looked at her, and even his dull masculine eyes, this time, did detect the tears in hers.

Quite a little while after, Lee said, "I always meant to behave the way Rebecca would or Flora MacIvor or Di Vernon, but you were so sudden I didn't have time to look it up. No, I did not behave the right way, I am sure."

But Giles was in no mood to criticize.

CHAPTER XXVIII

A SOUL OF THE RIGHTEOUS

AGATHA sat at her window her hands loosely clasped in her lap; her letter to Henrietta unfinished before her. The air was very still. The beginning of sunset glowed in the sky, a luminous, waveless, opal sea, above which burned thin purple-edged streaks of rose. All the dark river below its bend was silvered. Spirals of white smoke, such as only wood will make, curled above little low-browed cottages where the last meal of the day was preparing. Sometimes a woman would appear for a moment at a doorway; appearance was neater than common, and an apron shielding her better clothes. There were no plows in the field, but a group of men hung about the closed doors of the store. They also were in their Sunday garb and there was none of the shouts and songs and unctuous bursts of laughter which Africa was wont to roll out of such a group.

All these people had but a little while ago returned from Lily Pearl's funeral; and the spell of it was still upon them. Agatha could see Giles'

surrey and the gaily-decked mules trotting over the little bridge where Uncle Isaac met Danton. They were bearing the clergyman who had officiated, back to Galen for the evening train. He was a mulatto, a college-bred man from Fisk, who had taken orders in the Episcopal Church, and he was to have married Sidney to the woman whom he had buried. The services had been in the same large living-room of the bungalow which should have seen the marriage. They were simple, only the reading of the service and a hymn and a prayer from the clergyman offering thanks for the example of "this, our sister, Thy servant, whom Thou didst not permit for any pains of death to fall from Thee." They sang again, white men and black alike, white women and black, with tears on their cheeks, and voices that faltered, the mystical chant that the dead woman had sung; and far over smiling fields and blooming gardens to the cypress brake and the shadowy forests, swelled and sank its yearning.

"I walk frow de chu'chyard
To lay dis body down;
I know moon-rise, I know star-rise;
I'll lay dis body down!
I'll walk in de moonlight, I'll walk in de starlight
I'll lie in de grabe an' stretch out my ahms;
I'll go to jedgment in de ev'nin' of de day,
An' my soul an' thy soul shall meet dat day.
W'en I lay dis body down!"

All the household save Matilda, followed the black-

draped wagon improvised for a hearse, to the little negro cemetery on the side of the hill where, by Danton's wish, they laid the strong and beautiful body that had been Lily Pearl's. Matilda herself elected to remain behind. "I'll stay and have some tea and bread and butter ready for you when you come back," said she, "and then Lucille and Lucy and the men can all go; it's what Lily Pearl would want me to do, I'm sure; *she'll know* it's no lack of respect. I'll straighten out the house. And there's plenty of cake, too, if you want it, the poor creature baked all the afternoon before the day which was to be her wedding-day; so's you'd have plenty on hand—" Matilda's mouth worked and she winked hard. "I never did believe I'd come to feel that way for a colored person, but she had a way—and we'll never see a willinger soul, and how she used to laugh—Oh, dear!" Here Matilda choked beyond her swallowing; and openly wiped her eyes. So the girl stayed; and it was only when half way to the graveyard that Agatha bethought her of Matilda's never-waning terrors.

But when she asked Matilda later had she felt frightened, she answered, "No, ma'am, I was feeling so bad about Lily Pearl I didn't think about it."

And could she have given a greater tribute? thought Agatha. Well as she deemed she understood Lily Pearl's hold on the affections of her small world, Agatha was surprised at the sorrow displayed by the white people. Sally Caldwell had run over

to Memphis the day before, returning by the night train (a train of unimaginable slowness and discomfort) laden with flowers such as hardy gardens did not know; and had wept openly through the services —as had Mrs. Phil, although in the quietest of manners. And Lee's grief was as for one of their own household.

"We'll never have any one like her again," she sobbed; "I've put her in the book with my heroines. If the book only said about saints I would put her there, also. She was so brave and good; and because she laughed so much and made us laugh we didn't know."

The general had one precious rose tree which he had brought from Virginia from his wife's grave. He tended it with his own hands. No one was allowed to cut the white roses. This rose-bush he stripped and brought the roses over to Giles' house and placed them on the casket where Lily Pearl lay, in her snowy wedding-gown, brown and beautiful, still smiling that joyous smile of innocence and triumph which had been her last signal to the world as she left it.

He passed his delicate old fingers gently and reverently over the flowers and over the peaceful face.

"Good-by," he murmured, unwitting of Agatha's presence. "Good-by, you brave, faithful, loving creature. You had every virtue but one; and perhaps God may have more mercy for you than for those who having that one virtue have mighty few others."

In some way his mysterious prescience of another's presence apart from any testimony of his eyes warned him and he called, "Who is it, here?"

Agatha came forward, saying: "General, I think we can not deny poor Lily Pearl the virtue that she died for. Danton has told me of the confession he wrung from Meadowes. Rather than betray him for a minute she gave up her life—and she loved life so well! A little lying to her murderer, a little cajolery, a false caress and she would be living to-day. But she wouldn't buy her life that way. I don't think Lucretia did nearly so well. Let me tell you."

Standing by Lily Pearl's coffin, she told him what Danton had told her; while the tears rolled down the soldier's cheeks.

"I wronged her, Miss Agatha," he repented, "but who can fathom the depths of a woman's heart? It was a pure heart, poor Lily Pearl; and she won its purity herself; it was not given her and guarded for her; it was a flower out of the mire."

"Yes, sir," said Giles in tones so hushed they would not be recognized as his own, "she was a mighty good woman. Her faults were forced upon her, but her virtues were her own."

Giles' demeanor was the greatest surprise of all to his aunt. She had not dreamed to see him so subdued, almost humbled. "I'm not worthy of my happiness," he told her when he spoke of his engagement. "Why look at it, Aunty, here are Lee and I with everything made smooth for us, and poor Sid-

ney and Lily Pearl, who have had everything on earth against them. We inherited our chances, our power to use the chances; and they inherited just—burdens. And yet *she* was happy; and he loved her so he would have been. Happy on so little. It makes me ashamed of the way I have kicked over little nuisances of disappointments.

"And then to have this horror take away that little! I tell you, Aunty, I'm thinking some mighty queer thoughts. Now does it seem fair?"

"Yet it seems fair to that poor old woman who loved her so."

"Aunt Chloe? Aunty, I run when I see her. She breaks me all up!"

As Agatha sat, now, in the quiet and the evening glow, Aunt Chloe came back to her. She could see again the bent brown creature in her careful mourning, with little Antoinette clinging to her skirts, making her pitiful courtesy of respect as she entered the room. "I ben wishing to see my chile, if I kin, please, ma'am," she said.

When Agatha guided her to the coffin, she wondered if she could yet make some excuse to get the child away; but her courage failed. The old woman tried to lift Antoinette, but she had not the strength. It was Agatha Danforth who silently stepped forward and raised the light little form. The child was a little shy, a little frightened; she kissed her mother and she whimpered, why didn't mamma wake up? "She doan' be dar, lambie," said the old

woman, "she done gone to de bright worl' above; de angils done tuk 'er, but dey leabe dis image dat *doan'* be 'er but look jes' lak 'er, fo' t' holp we-uns t' git comfort."

She looked tenderly down on the peaceful face. "She sho' does look happy; and beautiful, tew," she murmured as her trembling fingers stroked Lily Pearl's hair. "Aint she got lubbly ha'r?" she whispered to Agatha, "so awful fine and silky and a'most straight." She brushed back the short, glossy waves which grew so prettily off the temples. "I used to bresh it and braid it w'en she ben a little gell. She ben an awful willin' little gell."

"She was always willing," said Agatha; and choked suddenly. The old grandmother had forgotten her and everything but her dead child. She looked at the face in the coffin while she talked to the Lord, quite as if she felt Him there in the room.

"O Lord, Dou knows dat chile, she nev' did mohn; but de saints and de martyrs dey didn't die no mo' brave an' true fo' de faif dan she done; an' I is sho', Lord, Dou ain't gwine lay hit up agin her dat she jis natchelly cud'n't holp bein' happy! Oh, honey, you sho' ben mighty pleasant to have roun' an' I t'anks my Lord kindly dat I hab you so long; I ain't gwine nev' grieb no mo' endurin' de few y'ars I gotter wait on you, honey; but I does be t'ankful dat dey ben so few!"

Agatha's heart had ached for the desolate creature; it was aching now. She could see Tobe in

the wood yard, filling his barrow with wood for Lucy, just as he had used to fill it for Lily Pearl, and beaming upon his recovered treasure just as he had once beamed on Lily Pearl. And the echoes of Lucille's silvery voice floated up to her: "Dat hoodoo come true jes' lak I tole it wud. She done tech his bones an' she layin' cole an' daid now—an' youall know how she died."

"How Lily Pearl would put that baggage down if she were here!" thought Agatha indignantly. But when she reflected on the inexorable march of life which can afford only the briefest pause to death (save in a few faithful hearts) and how Lily Pearl's tolerant humor would have made excuses for them as she made excuse for the little cruel boy, who "didn't know how it hurt;" and presently she remembered Tobias' honest grief and that he had hardly sat down for two days in his eagerness to "help somewhar;" and that the volatile Lucille, herself, had spent most of the night helping Matilda with Aunt Chloe's black gown. "Poor children," she sighed, "how much they need help and how hard it is to help them."

She took up her pen and added her final words to her letter.

"And, so, my dear friend, I come to the confusion of all my plans. Nothing is left me but a helpless pity. Poor Lily Pearl! Poor Danton! Poor people!

"Giles, who has had the Harvard persiflage

quelled by these awful happenings as I never expected to see it, says: 'Aunty, was there ever such an infernal conundrum put to a nation, on the whole decent and tender-hearted, as this negro question? What to do with a race we may not exterminate and we dare not assimilate? It's like nothing but the sphinx's riddle—answer it wrong; and she eats 'em up alive!'

"Giles may be right. Just a little segment of the huge problem has crushed *me,* I know. It is an awful thing, my friend, to run your theories into facts. Like nothing so much as a motor-car striking a locomotive. I only know the problem is too vast for me. I only feel that the solution in which I have believed from my youth up is all wrong. And what mischief have I not wrought in my arrogant confidence in myself and my conscience! Had I not tried in my weak, vain, impatient fashion to do big things at a stroke, Danton would not have had false hopes and followed me South, and poor Lily Pearl would still be singing in the sun. She loved life so! And yet, I wonder had she the choosing, would she not have felt this the better part. She has known love and happiness and the joy of comforting and helping and she has been privileged to die for the faith.

"But Danton is different. I feel as if I had sinned grievously when I did not check his ambitious hopes. Then he would not have come, and he would not

have had these awful experiences. Danton is like a man in a dream. He makes no complaints; he helps me in every considerate way possible; he is so kind to Aunt Chloe and the child that it brings a lump in my throat to see him. But I almost believe Giles, who says, 'When that poor chap wakes up he'll kill himself!' Once I said to Giles that I knew what Danton suffered. 'I guess not, Aunty,' said he; 'you only broke your heart; Danton's broken every bone in his soul.'

"Yet the time when I whipped my courage into telling him something of my remorse that through me he should have come here, he looked at me strangely and said, 'But if I hadn't come, I shouldn't have Lily!' And I have derived a good deal of comfort from that present tense. Perhaps he does feel she is, and she is his; and that is worth even this awful passage.

"But, oh, that this should be the ending of my gratitude to these poor, kind, faithful people to one of whose name I owe so much! Henrietta, my tears are dropping on the paper as I think of her, poor, dear Lily Pearl, who was so very pleasant to have around.

"This is what Danton has written out to be placed on her tombstone, after the customary name and dates:

" '*She was faithful unto death.*

" 'The souls of the righteous are in the hand of

God, and there shall no torment touch them. In the sight of the unwise they seem to die, and their departure is taken for misery and their going from us to be utter destruction, but they are in peace. Eternal rest grant unto her, O Lord, and may light perpetual shine upon her!' "

THE END